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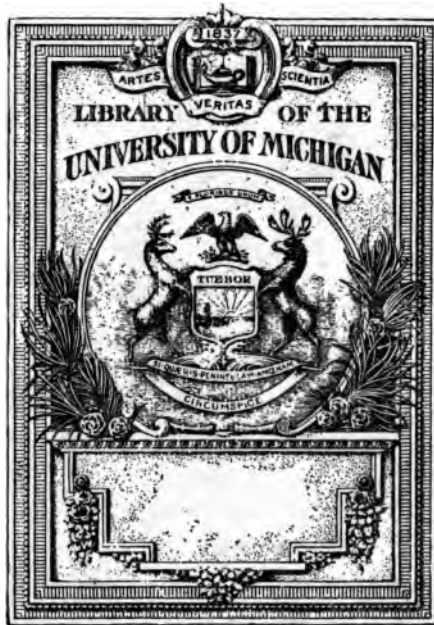
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IN THE CLUTCH OF CIRCUMSTANCE

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**IN THE CLUTCH
OF CIRCUMSTANCE**

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**IN THE CLUTCH
OF CIRCUMSTANCE**



IN THE CLUTCH OF CIRCUMSTANCES

**MY OWN STORY
BY A BURGLAR**



**D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
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INVICTUS

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

W. E. HENLEY (1875)

COLLABORATOR'S FOREWORD

The first time I saw the author of this autobiography was when he was serving out his last term in the Connecticut State Prison at Wethersfield. Since then I have had the opportunity of following the course of his development subsequent to his release and of visiting him in the new home which he has made with his wife.

His story is told here in his own words, practically as he himself wrote it. In putting it in form for publication, I have made only changes necessary to correct errors in expression or to condense and clarify it. His account stands as it came, from the life, without the introduction of superfluous commentary. It shows his own sense of how he wished to present his experience.

The interest in his narrative is the realistic interest in what a man actually did under certain conditions and how he felt about it. The moral question as to what he should have done is quite apart from consideration. Probably

COLLABORATOR'S FOREWORD

the majority of boys, if they were placed in the circumstances in which the narrator of this story found himself as a boy and were treated as he was treated, would do about as he did. The majority of adult criminals, if they were given a fair chance and confident friendship, as he was, probably would respond as he has responded.

His account of himself constitutes an impressive description, from experience, of the influences in modern environment which turn man; a man into a hardened criminal, and of the influences which an enlightened society could use to reclaim many such men and to recreate from them honorable, loyal and useful citizens.

MALCOLM W. DAVIS

NEW YORK CITY

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

To-day is the fifth anniversary of my release from Wethersfield Prison, where I served my last term. I call it my last because while I was there I decided that for me there would be no next time. In the hope of making it easier for other prisoners to come to a like decision and to live up to it, this story is told.

Out of consideration for others, as well as for personal reasons, this autobiography must obviously be written without using the names of the characters in it, including myself. My purposes in writing it are three-fold:—

First: I want to show, out of my own experience, how environment and evil surroundings and the indifference of society influence boys:

Second: I want to show what led me to my own final conclusion that crime does not pay:

Third: I desire to demonstrate that punishment alone, no matter how harsh, is in itself useless as a preventive measure, and that hu-

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

man kindness and confidence, a helping hand from others and a social square deal, are the only real reforming agencies. They turned me from a life of continued law-breaking to that of a law-abiding member of the community.

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PART I
DOWN GRADE



IN THE CLUTCH OF CIRCUMSTANCE

CHAPTER I

HOW MY LIFE BEGAN

TO my knowledge, the first offense I committed against the law was at the tender age of seven years. I broke into a garden and stole a bunch of flowers. This was in my little home village in the foreign country where I was born.

The victim of that heinous crime was no other than the town constable himself, who possessed a most wonderfully blooming lilac bush, which stood in the center of his small but well-kept garden. Everybody in town admired the constable's lilacs. So did I; and that made me think it perfectly proper to help myself to a nice big bunch. On my way

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home, I met the constable coming along the street; and his stern face and forbidding look made me feel guilty. He stopped me and demanded to know where and how I got my beautiful bouquet. Ashamed to admit my guilt, I tried to hide my face behind the blossoms. The constable recognized, or thought he recognized his own lilacs, and took me along with him. He was a big, tall, and stern man,—the constable. Everybody stood in awe of him. People said that he never went after his man without catching him. I know that he caught me.

When we arrived at his garden and he beheld the awful mess I had made of his beautiful lilac bush, saw the torn and broken branches,—he naturally became enraged.

“Why did you steal my flowers?” he demanded.

I commenced to cry. He threatened me with jail, while I begged for mercy. He looked down at me, and apparently the sight of the abject form of the pleading child and the pretty lilacs he so dearly loved made him

HOW MY LIFE BEGAN

take pity. His fear-inspiring countenance disguised a kind and soft heart. Picking up the flowers with his big horny hands, he put them in my arms again with the fatherly admonition to take them home to my mother and never again to commit such a terrible crime.

This incident of my childhood, which stands out most clearly in my mind to-day, made a deep impression on me; and I do not remember ever stealing another flower. It taught me a tremendous lesson—the lesson of keeping out of the constable's way and of avoiding *his* flower garden. But I still love lilacs, and never fail to get a big bunch in the spring-time.

.

It was some years later, when I must have been about twelve, that I perpetrated another crime. This time the minister of the most fashionable church in town happened to be the victim. The preacher had a well-kept fruit orchard adjoining the rectory. In this orchard stood a fine, big tree with nice, ripe,

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black cherries showing through its dark green leaves. One morning I was on the way to school with two other boys, and we passed the parson's orchard and spied the cherries. We made a beeline for that tree. We would have some cherries to eat, and also a supply of cherry pits to shoot about the schoolroom. The parson would not miss a few cherries; and, besides, since he was supposed to be a kind-hearted man, perhaps he would not even mind our taking them. Being always ready for the risks of an adventure, I climbed the tree, while my two pals stood watch and filled their pockets with the juicy fruit which I threw down to them. My own pockets I filled last. While I was thus busily engaged, I chanced to look down again; and, to my consternation, I saw a man, dressed in pajamas and a pair of slippers, standing at the foot of the tree! It was the parson. My two pals, at sight of the reverend gentleman, had taken to their heels without a warning.

The scanty attire of the minister, contrasting with his dignified countenance, made him

HOW MY LIFE BEGAN

look positively ridiculous. He first looked around on the ground; then he looked up and saw me sitting in the tree.

"Come down, you little rascal, come down," he roared. "I'll teach you to steal my cherries."

I hesitated. He became more insistent, saying that he would have me arrested and sent to prison for life. I became more frightened and reluctant to leave my perch. In fact, I went up a little higher, determined to spend the rest of my life up in the cherry tree, if necessary, rather than in state prison.

After vain endeavor to induce me to descend, and realizing the ridiculousness of his situation, the parson went back to the house—to procure his shot gun, I thought. This was my opportunity to escape. To slide down the tree and disappear was the work of a minute.

I was late to school. The teacher scolded me and also examined my hands, which were stained a dark red. As she was doing so, a cherry stone came whizzing from somewhere and struck her squarely in the face, leaving

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a dark red stain on her forehead close to her left eye. This put her in a rage, which she vented on me. Her lecture lasted for some time; and, just as she ordered me to take my seat, the door opened and in came the school principal, accompanied by the town constable and the parson. It was our unlucky day. We had got into a bad fix; and I began to grow nervous.

The minister's stern eye fell upon me, and I felt as though he were going to eat me alive.

"So," he at once began, "you are one of the scamps who stole my cherries."

To deny my guilt was useless. My pockets contained the evidence. I had nothing to say; and my silence admitted my guiltiness.

"Where are the other two culprits?" demanded the preacher.

No one in the class stirred. The room was as quiet as the parson's empty church. Then the principal called for a voluntary surrender on the part of the other two cherry thieves. The silence remained unbroken. As a last resort, the parson turned to me thinking that per-

HOW MY LIFE BEGAN

haps I would tell him the names of my two accomplices in the crime in his orchard. For me it was a painful moment, as I stood there facing that class of boys, while the eyes of the parson, the teacher, the principal, and the constable were fastened upon me. I was speechless with fright, but determined not to become a "squealer." Something made it impossible for me to give my comrades away.

The profound silence was broken by the constable, who cleared his throat to say something which, for some reason or other, he did not say. I caught his eye; and in it I noticed a look rather of approval than of reproach. That look gave me courage; and I bluntly told the parson to find out for himself. Instantly the whole class was in an uproar. Whispers flew from ear to ear, and voices became audible. Suddenly a thin voice, way back in the last row, piped out that my two pals had their pockets full of cherries and had been shooting the stones all over the room, even at the teacher.

The cat was out of the bag. There was a

" IN THE CLUTCH OF CIRCUMSTANCE

"squealer" in the room. Bedlam broke loose. Hisses and catcalls filled the air. In vain the teacher endeavored to restore order. The principal's gestures were unheeded and the parson's voice was drowned. The constable and I were the only two persons in that room who had nothing to say. We kept quiet and watched the rest.

Gradually the noise and turmoil subsided and shamefacedly the two culprits came to the front. Out of the boys' pockets the teacher produced the evidence—handfuls of crushed cherries. The parson gave a sigh of relief or grief, or perhaps both, and then a smile of triumph came over his face, exhibiting his fine set of false teeth.

We were marched out of the room amid the loud cheers of our schoolmates. On our way down the long flight of stairs, the constable took hold of my arm and, no doubt having recognized me as the thief who some years before had plundered his flower garden, said in a low voice:

"Now, sonny, you're in for it. It's life for

HOW MY LIFE BEGAN

yours, and it won't be my fault, either." I was terrified.

We were taken before the justice of the peace, a man who had a very high opinion of himself and of the importance of his office. Moreover, he was a deacon of the church. The parson appeared as our accuser. In high-sounding phrases and long-drawn-out sentences, he explained to the judge how, in the early morning hours, while deeply absorbed in the study of his sermon for the ensuing Sabbath day, he chanced to glance out of the window overlooking the orchard, and there, to his utter mortification, he beheld these three young rascals tearing down big branches from his favorite cherry tree. The tree itself was ruined, he declared. No punishment could be too severe for such an act of vandalism on the part of the culprits before the judge.

The naturally stern and wrinkled face of the judge acquired a terrible frown as he sized us up. Then, in order to corroborate his statements, the parson produced the stolen cherries as evidence. Evidence was not required, how-

IN THE CLUTCH OF CIRCUMSTANCE

ever. To the judge, it was a clear case of robbery. The preacher's word was sufficient. Our punishment was swift and sure. The justice handed us over to the officer with instructions to place us in the town lockup for safe-keeping until our parents had been notified of our crime. The constable marched us off to the jail, a dingy one-story building adjoining the fire station.

Arriving there, we were crowded into the single cell or room which served as a place for the safe-keeping of drunkards, tramps, and such offenders. The first few hours of our confinement passed quicky enough; but the afternoon seemed to drag very slowly. Besides, we were getting quite hungry. Finally, toward evening, our parents succeeded in securing our release by putting up a bond for our future good behavior. We had taken our medicine like men, and in the eyes of our schoolmates we were something like heroes. What, thought we, did anything else matter?

Through all these years of boyhood, my brothers and sisters and I grew up practically

HOW MY LIFE BEGAN

uncontrolled. Early in my childhood my father had died, and left my mother alone to support a large family, of which I was the youngest and the wildest. Too proud to accept public charity, my mother worked very hard to save the little home. She had almost no time to devote to the care and guidance of her children. We, in turn, were too young to appreciate what she was doing for us; and I fear that I added many anxious hours to her cares, which were heavy enough.

We buried our mother when I had reached the age of fourteen. The death of my mother was the hardest blow and deepest sorrow which up to that time had come to me. I then realized what she had meant to me, and prized her far more than I had been able to do while she was still alive. Moreover, the loss of her left me alone in the world—an orphan.

CHAPTER II

ALONE IN THE WORLD

IN a near-by city there lived a brother of my dead mother, a man whom I had seen but once in all my life. This man the law appointed as my guardian. On the day when our little house had been sold at auction, my uncle and guardian came and took me away with him. He procured a place for me as porter in a small hotel on the outskirts of the city where he lived.

My work in the hotel was anything but pleasant and congenial; but I found the city life extremely interesting at first. The continuous coming and going of people and my intercourse with them soon broadened my point of view of the world and life in general. I began to see and know a few things which I had never seen or known before. Furthermore, I learned how to shine shoes, make beds,

ALONE IN THE WORLD

tap beer, serve meals, wash dishes, and even to boil water without burning it. I was, in fact, porter, dishwasher, bartender, and chambermaid, all in one. My working hours were anytime from six o'clock in the morning to twelve at night, at which hour the manager locked the door of the hotel. Sometimes, I was permitted to have an hour or two of rest in the afternoon. This, however, happened only on very rare occasions.

My uncle became a regular visitor at the establishment. At a certain hour in the morning, he would drop in for a glass of *schnapps*. In the afternoon he would come for his stein of beer. He never paid for what he drank. His habit was to pay at the end of the month, he said.

I worked at the place for almost six months without receiving a penny by way of pay for my services. In fact, since a room and meals were furnished to me, it never entered my head to ask for any money, until one day I asked my employer for enough to buy a pair of shoes of which I stood sadly in need. With a

IN THE CLUTCH OF CIRCUMSTANCE

grin which gave a canny expression to his dark red face, he told me to see my uncle about that. So, on his next visit to the place, I asked my uncle about my wages. I told him that I needed shoes and clothing, and that my boss had referred me to him for money.

"Me?" cried my uncle. His bloated face became red. His breath smelt of brandy. "Do you expect me to support you?"

A vicious kick from his boot sent me flying across the room. From that time on, I never spoke another word to my guardian and uncle. Shortly afterwards I learned the facts. He had drunk up every cent of my hard-earned money. All this time I had been the slave of a drunkard.

The thought of it brought a feeling of bitterness and a desire for revenge into my heart—an emotion which I had no way to express, in action at least. So I cried till my heart seemed about to break.

After that I lived the life of a dog. Everybody had a right to kick me. The smell of stale beer and *schnapps* every day made me

ALONE IN THE WORLD

sick. My health began to fail. The thought that I was working merely to satisfy the thirst of a man whom the law had appointed as guardian over me made me furious. I felt that I could bear the burden no longer, but there was not a soul to whom I could go for advice. Moreover, I could not leave my work without my uncle's consent. He had the law on his side; and I had no recourse or appeal. It was this experience which really began to turn me against society and its laws. I felt a deep injustice. I had only a few rags on my back and torn shoes on my feet, and I had no home or other refuge. Still, to get away from this life of drudgery I felt to be a necessity. I wanted to go far away.

While my mother was still alive, I had often heard her speak of a wealthy uncle, whom I had seen once and who lived somewhere in America. He had left home while still a young man, and was now a successful brewer in a big city in the United States called Baltimore. My youthful brain was busy night and day with the one thought of how to get to

IN THE CLUTCH OF CIRCUMSTANCE

America. Once there, I felt, my troubles would be at an end.

My knowledge of this land of wonders and opportunities was limited, chiefly, to a couple of books, *Leather Stocking Tales* and *The Last of the Mohicans*. Translations of these I had read some few years before, and they set my boy's imagination on fire. How to get the necessary funds to go to America was the great question which puzzled my mind constantly.

One night, after closing time, seeing my employer counting over the day's receipts and placing the cash carelessly in a drawer, which he left unlocked, I was overwhelmed by a powerful temptation to take the money. It was a fine chance and, moreover, as I reasoned, I was entitled to my wages. My employer had been drinking heavily all that day, and he left me to close up. So, shortly after his retirement, I took the money out of the drawer, put on my hat and coat, and left the place, which had been my second home for over eight months, for parts unknown. How long it took

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me to reach the railway station, I cannot tell. As luck would have it, the midnight express was just ready to leave for the nearest seaport. To procure my ticket and to board the train were easy.

The following afternoon saw me safely in Antwerp, where I immediately set out to find a ship bound for America. Upon inquiry at the steamship office, however, I discovered to my amazement that the money I had was far from sufficient to pay even for a third-class ticket. My hopes of getting to America were badly dashed. Luck, after all, seemed against me. I was at a loss what to do next. However, one day while on a sight-seeing tour about the harbor, I made the acquaintance of a young sailor to whom I told my story. He seemed interested, and especially so after I had treated him to a good meal. My talk with my new-found friend gave me fresh courage. Like myself, he had run away from home and started out in search of adventure. He had made several short voyages on a French fishing boat to the banks of Newfoundland;

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but life on a fishing vessel had no more attraction for him. He was possessed by the *wanderlust*, and to see the world seemed to be his sole ambition.

Unable to obtain work on board the many ships that filled the harbor of Antwerp, we finally decided to stow away on board the first steamer for America. So, one night, while in a public house, we joined a party of sailors belonging to a large vessel bound for America. Getting into conversation with one of them, we learned that the ship had completed taking on cargo and was ready to sail the following morning. A bottle of rum procured for us the good will of the "man before the mast." He promised to find a good hiding place for us, and, under cover of the darkness, it was an easy matter to steal on board ship. Guided by our friend, we had no difficulty in finding our way amidships to a small compartment filled with hay used to feed the live stock. After admonishing us to remain in hiding until after the ship had left Southampton, which was the first stop after leaving Antwerp, he closed

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the door and left us alone in the dark. Our feelings were a mixture of joy and fear—joy to think that at last we were bound for America, and fear that we might be discovered and put off the ship. However, we kept up our courage, and were soon sound asleep.

Loud voices and heavy footsteps overhead, and three loud blares of the ship's siren, which meant departure, awakened us out of our deep slumber and told us that we were on our way at last. We also were conscious of a great vacuum inside. The vibration of the engines indicated that we were going down the Scheldt River full speed toward the ocean.

All that day and the following night we remained voluntary prisoners in our dark hiding place. In the meantime, that vacuum in the region of the solar plexus became so painful that we feared we were in danger of starving to death. At last the torments of hunger and of thirst drove us to make our presence known by pounding on the door. Some one, hearing the noise, informed the boatswain and he opened the door. He immediately recognized

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us as stowaways and led us up on the bridge before the captain. The mere sight of the captain's large frame, long blond beard and deep blue eyes, which made him look like the typical Viking he was, made us tremble with fear. His sternness being only on the surface, however, the sound of his kindly voice soon dispelled our fears. Looking down at us, he said:

"How did you get on board?"

The bo'sun saluted and said briefly: "Two stowaways, sir."

Something in the captain's eyes gave me courage, and I spoke up: "We walked on at Antwerp, sir. We want to go to America."

"What part of America?" he asked.

"Baltimore, sir," I replied.

"Why, my dear boy, we are bound for Buenos Ayres in South America!" said the captain.

Just then my companion in misery blurted out: "I don't care where we are bound for. I'm hungry!"

At this uncalled-for outburst of feeling, the

ALONE IN THE WORLD

captain could hardly restrain a grin. He briefly ordered the petty officer to have us fed and put to work scrubbing decks and polishing brass. Later during the voyage I was assigned to help the cook, as he was short of assistants. My task, for the rest of the trip, was to peel potatoes, wash pots, scrub out the kitchen, and do almost anything else the cook could possibly think of to order me to do.

When the ship arrived in Buenos Ayres, the captain, who seemed to have taken an interest in me, suggested that I might stay aboard. His kind suggestion, however, did not quite appeal to me. Curiosity and the desire for further adventure in new surroundings impelled me to refuse his proposal, to leave my recently found comrade from Antwerp on board the steamer, and to go ashore in Buenos Ayres alone.

CHAPTER III

ADVENTURES IN REACHING THE UNITED STATES

THE sights of Buenos Ayres—the public buildings surrounding the palm-shaded square, the people of many races and types clad in the bright colors of South America, the luxury of the upper classes and the squalor of the poor—all made a deep impression upon my mind.

With little or no money in my pocket, I started out at once to look for work. But night came and found me still wandering the streets of Buenos Ayres. Being unable to speak Spanish, I had difficulty in finding a lodging house. Finally, some one familiar with my own language directed me to the Salvation Army, at whose refuge I obtained a night's lodging and a fairly good breakfast for the little money I had.

During the following day, I wandered about the town in search of work. All that day I

IN REACHING THE UNITED STATES

had to go without food, and night found me once more knocking at the door of the Salvation Army. Since I was out of funds, the clerk directed me to the nearest police station. It had been raining hard all day. Discouraged and drenched to the skin, I set out, and at a very late hour, close to midnight, I at last reached the station house. The experience in that station house is still vivid, for it drove home in my mind a new sense of my position. The swarthy police officer in charge, being unable to understand my requests, simply took me by the arm and led me out through a dark corridor into the inner court or yard. There he unlocked a heavily barred door and, mumbling something in Spanish, thrust me into the dark room, relocking the door behind me. Thus I found myself sheltered, it is true, but shut in—a “suspicious character.” I could not describe the feeling with which I realized myself locked up. It was the first time I had been so definitely set apart, without a special cause. The experience left its mark upon my mind.

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got the orders wrong, of course, and blamed the cook. The cook chucked a plate in my direction, which missed me. Then the manager, who had heard the rumpus, came into the kitchen and chucked me. My breakfast was all I got for my work; but I was quite satisfied. Besides, a job as a waiter never struck my fancy. My next job was in a brewery washing bottles. I held that position for about a month; but this sort of work also I found too uninteresting.

So I went down to the docks and watched the loading of cattle on board the big steamers. While I was thus occupied, a man approached me and asked how I would like to work aboard one of those cattle boats. The suggestion appealed to me. I went on board, was assigned to a job, and the following day the ship was on its way to London. Three weeks later we docked in England, discharged our cargo of live stock, and proceeded to Antwerp, the port from which I had started. There I was discharged with wages of three pounds and a half, the most money I had ever possessed up to that

IN REACHING THE UNITED STATES

time. I was stuck in Antwerp for over a week; and the money I had earned as cattle tender was beginning to get low. I still wanted to reach North America and find my uncle; but the attempts I made to find a chance to work my way across were futile. So I decided to resort to the stowaway game once more.

A big German transoceanic liner tied up one day at the outer quay. I resolved to sail with her. Accordingly, I boarded the vessel under cover of darkness and stowed away in one of two large lifeboats on the after deck. For over twenty-four hours I remained in the lifeboat. Then hunger and cold drove me out of my hiding place. A member of the crew who saw me emerge from the boat gave the alarm and I was led before the captain on the bridge. He questioned me closely as to where and how I got on board, and then piped the boatswain and ordered him to take me down to the ship's physician for an examination of my feet, which had been severely frostbitten while I lay concealed in the lifeboat. The doctor removed me to the ship's sick bay for treatment.

IN THE CLUTCH OF CIRCUMSTANCE

A nourishing meal and a comfortable night's rest made me begin to take interest in my surroundings again, and I started to make inquiries concerning the vessel's destination, assuming it, of course, to be America. To my consternation and disgust I found that the ship was bound on a long voyage to the Far East and Australia.

Further inquiries, however, revealed that the first port of call was Genoa in Italy, where the liner was to take on passengers and mail. Immediately, the plan of getting transferred to a hospital in Genoa began to take form in my mind. My frostbitten feet needed more thorough treatment, I suggested to the doctor on his next visit to the sick bay. That official, being glad to get rid of his only patient in such an easy way, promptly complied with my request to have me transferred to a hospital in Genoa and promised to see that it was favorably passed upon by the captain. At Genoa the first person to leave the ship was myself. An ambulance took me to the hospital where I remained for some time.

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Discharged on full recovery from the effects of frostbite, I looked about and discovered a vessel about to sail for the port of New York, in the United States of America! There was no mistake about the destination of the ship this time. I determined to climb on board under cover of darkness. The vessel lay some two hundred feet out from the shore, and two long hausers secured the stern of the ship to the pier. In order to get aboard without being noticed, it was necessary for me to climb hand over hand up one of these hausers. Successful in the attempt, but rather exhausted, I reached the deck and disappeared into the steerage, where I crawled under one of the bunks and was soon sound asleep. My loud snoring was my undoing, for suddenly I woke to find myself being yanked out by the legs from under the bunk. My captor, one of the crew, promptly brought me before the captain, who sharply ordered me to be placed under lock and key, with bread and water for sustenance, until we arrived at Naples, the first port of call. There I was taken out of con-

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finement and handed over to the local police. The Neapolitan police, however, in view of my youth, promptly set me free.

I seemed to have become a regular "Flying Dutchman" and thought I should never reach port in America, as I desired.

The sight of Naples, with Mt. Vesuvius in the distance, again roused my interest in strange places. Instead of looking for another ship immediately, I wandered along the shore of the bay toward Vesuvius. Watching the dark clouds of smoke which issued from the crater of the volcano, I soon found myself far along the road leading to the two ancient destroyed cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Determined to see the historic ruins, I walked along the outer wall of Pompeii, until I found a place where it was possible for me to climb over without being noticed by the guard. So I saw the city, and then left by way of the main entrance. Night was approaching, and realizing that food and shelter were of vital necessity, I selected a great monastery near the road as the best possible hotel, where both might

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be had free of charge. The monks gave me supper and a bed, on some straw on the stone floor, for the night.

All these experiences had deepened in me a sense of being a castaway adrift on the surface of life, with no responsibility to any one or anything in the world except myself. So, with less timidity or hesitation this time, reaching Naples afoot once more, and hungry and tired, I scanned the ships in the bay. There, alongside the central dock, lay the great express steamer *Augusta Victoria*. The flags, streamers, and pennants which waved gayly from bow to stern of the great ship seemed to bid me welcome. I knew that the vessel was bound for America.

It was quite dark when I arrived at the central dock. Experience had already made me somewhat of an expert in the art of boarding ships unseen; and once more luck was charitable to me and helped me to slip aboard. The crew had just completed their evening meal as I passed the mess-room door. The smell of food made me stop. There was enough left on

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the table to feed a dozen hungry boys like myself. Boldly, I walked into the mess-room; and the steward, evidently suspecting my wants, motioned me to help myself. When I got through eating, there was very little food left on the table. I thanked my host and started out for the boat deck.

Unnoticed by any one, I reached the upper main deck and selected one of the small, collapsible lifeboats as my hiding place. At the time scheduled, the ship sailed with the usual blaring of the siren and the rendering of national airs by the band, as the lines were cast off and the ship swung out from the wharf on her way.

At the last strains of the music, my thoughts were far away, back in my old home. Now, like a thief, I lay hidden in the lifeboat of the big ocean liner in the hope of finding for myself a *new home* in the New World. My whole heart and soul were longing for some place which I could call my home—a real home.

The ship pursued her course toward Genoa, the port I had left some three or four days previously. At Genoa the ship remained

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twenty-four hours in the harbor. Then, with the exception of a stop of a few hours at Gibraltar, it was to sail straight to New York. Determined not to be put off at Genoa, I remained in my hiding place all the time the ship lay in the port, and decided that I would do so even until after she had passed Gibraltar.

Genoa being known to sailors the world over as the worst place for stowaways, the ship was thoroughly searched an hour or so before leaving for that species of sea rovers. A second boatswain's mate came to examine the boat where I lay hidden. He noticed that the line securing the canvas cover of the boat had been tampered with, and lifted up the flap which hung loose, and peeped in. My foresight in selecting the forward end of the boat, away from the opening, as my hiding place, saved me from discovery and arrest. The sailor carefully fastened the canvas cover. I was safe! Once more the ship sailed on its way.

Up to this time, I had been forty hours in the boat. From Genoa to Gibraltar the time, under favorable conditions, was two days more.

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Had I, at that time, known that a storm would strike the ship and delay it, I would in all probability have made my presence known and been put off at that place. Luckily for me, however, I was ignorant of time and distance. Meanwhile hunger struck its sharp fangs into my vitals, and gnawed and gnawed and gnawed until my brain seemed about to push through the top of my head. The cramped position in which I had lain during three days and nights had absolutely paralyzed my body from the waist down. To move an inch in my place between the compartments of the lifeboat was impossible.

A terrible weakness came over me on the fourth day. I had two fainting spells caused by hunger. All that day I stared up at the gray canvas which covered the boat, with wild thoughts whirling through my mind. Still I was afraid to stir from my place, and almost too weak to do so.

At last the sharp blasts of the siren and the rattle of the anchor chains announced the ship's arrival at Gibraltar. This was on the morn-

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ing of the fifth day of my voluntary confinement. A few hours more and I should be safe!

Those hours were perhaps the longest in my life. Immediately after the ship had left Gibraltar, I gathered the little strength I had left in me and prepared to get out of the lifeboat. In order to do so, however, it was necessary to make a hole in the canvas cover of the steel boat. I had no knife with which to cut a slit or opening of any kind. Within reach of me, however, was a tin can used for water. From this I removed the cover and started to saw my way out of confinement. My efforts were finally crowned with success. First, I thrust my arms out, and then my head. Summoning all the strength in my half-starved body, I made a supreme effort to release myself. The upper half of my body I had got clear of the boat cover, when a sickening sensation came over me, and I fell limp over the gunwale.

When I regained consciousness, I found myself lying comfortably in the bunk of a dark cabin, with the waves washing against the side of the ship near my head.

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Presently the cabin door opened and a rather good-looking young man, dressed in a white uniform, entered. He was the doctor. With a friendly smile on his face, he felt my pulse and said: "Hungry, my boy, aren't you?" I said that I surely would like to have something to eat. Without further remarks, the doctor left my cabin. He had not been gone very long, however, when the door was pushed open again, and a steward entered with a tray, set with a bowl of milk and some crackers. He cautioned me to eat very slowly, and then left the room, locking the door behind him, like the keeper of the Buenos Ayres jail. However, I was growing accustomed to being regarded with suspicion.

It was somewhat later in the day when the door was unlocked and the ship's doctor came in, accompanied by a tall, heavily built man with a long, blond beard coming down on his chest, and with broad gold stripes on his cap and sleeves. Knowing it was the captain, I became frightened. His kind, deep blue eyes, however, which had an expression of sympathy

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rather than harshness, gave me courage. He asked if I felt a little stronger after the meal which the steward had served to me. I made no reply, but could not suppress a grin, which spread itself all over my face.

Then the doctor assured the captain that a day or two of rest and careful dieting would put me on my feet again. Apparently satisfied, the captain wanted to know the object of my going through so much suffering. I told him of my rich uncle in America and how hard I had tried to get over to him. Shaking his massive head sympathetically, he departed with the doctor.

A day later the physician gave me permission to take a few hours' exercise on the after main deck. The next day the captain, who must have noticed the tattered condition of my clothing, sent his personal steward to my cabin with a pair of dark blue trousers, a shirt, and a pair of shoes, which the captain himself had discarded.

I promptly took a long-needed bath and completely lost myself in the captain's clothing.

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There was sufficient room in the shirt and trousers to accommodate another stowaway of my size. However, none was discovered; and I remained the sole occupant of the captain's clothing. After having completed dressing and rolling up the sleeves of the shirt and the legs of the trousers, I proceeded to roll up carefully my own discarded rags, and making a neat bundle of them all, I walked out to the rail and chucked overboard these last evidences of my old life, with no regrets. Members of the crew passed by me with ill-concealed grins, while passengers who saw me simply laughed out loud at my appearance. I did not see the joke.

For the rest of the voyage I received a commission on the culinary staff as potato peeler.

On a bright morning in April we steamed through the Narrows, passed the Statue of Liberty, and glided up North River in New York Harbor. My eyes felt about to pop out of my head when the outline of the great American metropolis came into plain view. Nothing that I had ever seen before was like the sight of the

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tall buildings and the docks and ships we passed on our way up the river. At the Hoboken pier, the passengers went ashore. Since I had served in the crew, I judge, the captain passed over my presence on board and did not report me to the authorities, who might otherwise have taken me in charge and held me at Ellis Island for deportation. I had three cents in my pocket, which some kind-hearted passenger had given me. With this capital, and clad in the captain's voluminous clothing, I left the ship and crossed by the ferry to New York City.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

ON the very same day that I landed in New York, I also secured work as a dish washer in a down town restaurant. When I left my position some five months later, I had a brand new suit of clothes and sufficient money in my pocket to pay for a round trip ticket to Baltimore. Happy in the thought that after so many months of trials I had at last almost accomplished my purpose, I boarded the train. Leaning back in my seat, I marveled at the comfort and speed of the Baltimore express, and then pictured myself riding in the carriages of my rich uncle, and how he would send me to high school and perhaps even to the university. It all seemed quite probable, and yet too good to be true.

On arriving in Baltimore, I went to a cheap lodging house, and then immediately set out

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to make inquiries about my uncle's brewery. I went from brewery to brewery, asking for my uncle, but without results. No person by the name of my uncle was known to possess a brewery in the city of Baltimore. I was disappointed, but tried again, asking the first police officer I saw. He looked at me, and with a derisive grin pointed across the street to a saloon.

"Go over there," he said. "A man by that name is keeping that joint. Maybe *he's* your rich uncle!"

Following the policeman's direction, I walked across the street and entered the saloon. There I saw my uncle standing behind the bar serving whisky to a crowd of drunken sailors.

Owing to the fact that I had considerably changed since he had last seen me some eight or nine years before, while on a visit home, he did not recognize me. Undecided at first whether to empty the glass of beer I ordered and leave without saying a word to my uncle, I suddenly stuck out my hand across the bar and said:

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"Hello, uncle! Don't know me any more, do you?"

He gave me a disapproving look and told me to wait. "I am too busy just now to be bothered with a little water-rat like you," he said. I went into the back room to wait, disillusioned.

Finally, after the noisy crowd had left the place, my uncle came into the back room and, smiling now, took me by the hand.

"How in hell did you ever get over here?" he asked. "And who told you to come to me?"

I told him my story. He could not understand and I could not make him believe that I had tried for seven months and traveled half the way around the world just to get to Baltimore. However, he was kind enough to offer me a square meal and shrewd enough to offer me a job as bar tender. I accepted the meal, but declined the position.

That same night found me on the train on my way back to New York, where I hoped to get my old job again. Washing dirty dishes in a lunch room now seemed to my mind, if less

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interesting, at least more honorable than serving liquor and mopping up the bar room floor. I had already had all the experience in that line that I wanted. On my return to New York, finding that my former position had been filled, I decided to go to work on a farm, as it was harvest time and farm laborers were in great demand. One of the many employment agencies on Greenwich Street offered to send me to a farmer somewhere out on Long Island, at wages of ten dollars a month and board. My railroad fare was to come out of my wages. Being "broke," I signed the agreement and started off to work on the Long Island farm.

The life of a farm hand some twenty years ago was hard work from sunrise to sunset, and then some more. About a week of this sort of life was enough for me. Feeling also that I was receiving a low rate of pay for a great deal of work, I decided to go back to the city. Since by agreement the farmer had paid my fare to the country and also the fee exacted by the employment agency, no money was coming

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to me for at least the first two weeks. So, one evening after supper, I picked up my few belongings and quietly departed. I walked and kept on walking until long after midnight, when I reached the outskirts of Flushing. There, exhausted, I crept into a barn for some rest. It was in the early dawn that I arose and continued my way cityward.

While I was peacefully passing through the residential section of Flushing, a man on a bicycle stopped me and, producing a shield, demanded that I give an account of myself. He did not credit my story, and compelled me to open my bundle. Finding nothing suspicious, he began to search my pockets. He found an ordinary key, the key to my room in the farm house, which I had carried away in my pocket in my haste in leaving the farm. With a look of surprise and satisfaction, the officer slipped the key into his pocket and took me along with him to the police station. A charge of vagrancy was lodged against me and I was locked up in a steel cage.

I shall make no attempt to describe my feel-

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ings through that day and night in the Flushing police station. Protests and indignation at the injustice brought only the command to "shut up."

The following morning, after a confinement of over twenty-four hours, I was taken before a police judge for a hearing. Then my sense of justice received another shock. The clerk of the court read the charge against me. The prosecuting attorney jumped to his feet and made a motion that the charge be changed from vagrancy to that of carrying burglars' tools.

"Your honor," said the prosecutor, addressing the judge, "this young man is a dangerous criminal traveling about the country as a farm hand and—" pointing to the police officer who had arrested me, "the officer will produce the evidence as proof of the charge."

My captor, to my consternation, took from his pocket the key which he had taken away from me, and an old rusty pistol which I had never seen before. The court, overruling my protest, bound me over to the Court of General

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Sessions, and I was taken to the Queens County jail to await trial. While in jail, I learned one piece of news which made the situation seem clearer to me. A number of burglaries had recently been committed in and around Flushing; and the residents of the town, in order to stimulate the police to stop the crimes, had offered one hundred dollars reward for the arrest and conviction of persons suspected of having taken part in them.

Without friends, without money, and without counsel, my fate was a foregone conclusion. Some six weeks after my arrest, the Court of General Sessions convened at Jamaica, Long Island, where I was taken for trial. The lawyer whom the state appointed to defend me was useless. He merely played into the hands of the prosecuting attorney.

Right here I want to urge the inauguration of a system of public defenders, men elected by the people and invested with the same powers as the public prosecutors, men who have the interest and welfare of their clients at heart and are economically independent of the settle-

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ment of any given case and impartial in the conduct of their office. Had there been such a man to handle my case, I am sure to this day I should never have known what the inside of a prison looks like and never have made a long criminal record.

As it was, the court sentenced me to one year in the King's County Penitentiary, and that on a trumped-up charge. Securely handcuffed to a deputy sheriff, I was taken to the old penitentiary situated in the outskirts of Brooklyn.

Over twenty years have passed since the day I started to serve my first prison sentence. It is rather difficult, after so many years, to recall the feelings and the thoughts which surged through my mind as the prison gates clashed shut behind me. But I distinctly recall standing before the old warden—Patrick Hays was his name—who, noticing my boyish features, inquired my age and said:

“You’re starting in rather early in the burglar business, sonny!”

The warden then told me that if I behaved

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myself and obeyed the rules and regulations, my sentence would be reduced to ten months. To me this was cold comfort; they had no right to sentence me to prison in the first place. Besides, the penitentiary was no place for a boy of sixteen years.

Before being locked into a cell, I was first given a bath and a hair cut, and put into a suit of black and white stripes, which was many sizes too large for me. My cell was a small, dingy, ill-ventilated hole, containing a table and two iron frames hinged to the wall with sheets of canvas stretched over them, which served as beds. A tin cup and spoon and lamp made up the rest of the furniture. This eight-by-six hole in the wall I had to share with another prisoner.

The minute I was forced to wear prison stripes and occupy that cell, I cursed the day that I was born and became an avowed enemy of society. The very idea of taking a defenseless boy of my age and casting him into such a hole made me furious. The ideals and hopes with which I had come to America made me

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still more bitter. This was my welcome in the land of opportunity! It was late in the afternoon, and the setting sun still threw a beam of light through the iron bars of my cell. Presently it was gone, and with it vanished my last ray of hope and of faith in humanity for many years to come.

The sharp sound of the gong, the grinding of bolts and the slamming of doors, and the tread of heavy footsteps brought my wandering mind back to my surroundings. A keeper opened my cell door and roughly ordered me to take my tin cup and fall in the line which was forming outside in the prison corridor. At the command, "Forward, march!" the line started to move out into the prison yard toward the kitchen, where one by one each man received a piece of soggy bread and a cup of black liquid, masquerading under the name of tea, for supper. Holding the tin cup in one hand and the "punk" (prison slang for bread) in the other, we were marched back to our cells.

After I had tasted some of the bread and taken a sip of the tea, the big bell on the prison

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tower rang, to be followed by the tramp of heavy footsteps on the iron stairs and galleries. Then the men whose cells were on the same corridor with mine came marching in, slamming the barred doors behind them. At last, the fellow occupying the cell with me came in. Once more there was the grating sound of iron bolts as the locks sprang into place; and then the count was taken by the officer, each prisoner standing close to the cell door to be counted.

The count being completed, the signal was given to "light up." The tier tender, a "trusty," came with a small torch in hand to light the oil lamps in the cells. In the dim light of this lamp, I got my first good look at my cell mate. With the exception of his telling me to stand up when the count was taken, we had not spoken a word to each other. I was not in a talkative mood by any means. My cell mate was a young fellow of about twenty, with dark curly hair and a rather handsome face. In complete silence, sitting on the edge of his cot, he ate his soggy bread

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and drank the tea. Then, lighting a cigarette, he asked me to have a smoke. This broke the ice. That night, before the bell rang for lights out, I had learned a great many things from my cell mate about the prison and prison ethics.

He told me about the terrible "cooler," or punishment cell, where recalcitrant inmates were locked up on bread and water for weeks at a stretch. He explained to me the nature of the work done in the shops, and how, a few days before, during a fight among some prisoners in the shop in which he worked, one man had been half killed.

The first night I did not sleep a wink, while my mate on the cot over me snored continuously. The sound of the gong at six o'clock the following morning was music to my ears. We got up, dressed, and were marched out to a long sink in the corridor to wash. Then we went back to the cell, picked up the tin cup and night bucket, and, forming in line, marched out into the prison yard. There we deposited the buckets near the pump, and slowly moved

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in single file toward the kitchen, where each man received a slice of bread, a tin pan containing hash made of boiled potatoes and poor meat, and a cup of black brew which is known in prison parlance as "bootleg." We were allowed half an hour for breakfast. Then, at seven o'clock, the signal was given for the men to make up the different gangs for the shops to which they were assigned.

Besides myself, there had been one or two other new arrivals; and since we had not as yet been assigned to any work in the shops, we were told to stand against the wall and wait. After the various gangs had left the prison hall, the head keeper commanded us to form in single file and marched us across the yard to the long brick workshops, where I was put to work making brooms. This was to be my daily occupation for a year, and the only helpful thing I learned in the penitentiary.

CHAPTER V

THE MAKING OF A CRIMINAL

LOOKING back now, after so many years of bitter experience, I realize what a terrible school in crime that prison really was to the many young boys who were serving short sentences there. The daily contact with other and older criminals constituted a course in degeneracy and law breaking. The volumes of cheap dime novels and Wild West stories, which circulated secretly in the place, were merely so many textbooks in that breeding place of criminals and hotbed of immorality. The average citizen, going securely and peacefully about his daily business, little realizes that the taxes he pays are actually helping to support such institutions to-day, where boys of tender age, with their minds in the most impressionable period of development, are turned, not into useful and law-

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abiding citizens, as they should be, but into law breakers and anarchists, dangerous enemies of society.

After a few days of prison routine, I began to take an interest in my surroundings. Being so young and naturally of a happy disposition, I soon struck up acquaintances both in the workshop and the prison hall. My cell mate and I soon became very intimate with each other. He was there for stealing a piece of lead pipe, so he told me; and the police had sent him up to the King's County pen for a year. Like myself, he was sore not only at the police, but at society as a whole. His one thought, as mine was coming to be, was to "get even" after he got out.

He had already served two months of his sentence, and was working in the prison bakery, helping to bake the soggy bread for the inmates. Sometimes, when opportunity would present itself, he used to steal a piece of cake or pie from the officers' department and conceal it in the bosom of his shirt. He

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always shared the stolen delicacies with me in the cell at night.

While an old man armed with a club and wearing the badge and uniform of a prison guard was nominally in charge of the broom shop I worked in, a few "trusties" were actually running the establishment according to their own ideas. Among them was one fellow who deserves special mention. He was serving a twenty-five-year term, and had been sent to the King's County Penitentiary back in the eighties by the Federal Government for a train robbery. "Dynamite Jack," they called him; and since he was the terror of the prison, even the officials were a little afraid of him and let him do very much as he pleased.

Personally, I admired Jack. In my eyes, he was a hero; and I would often listen to him telling gruesome stories of train and bank robberies in the middle and southwestern states. He knew the Jesse James band and the Younger brothers well, and had in fact taken part in some of their marauding ex-

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peditions. "Dynamite Jack" was a character—a dangerous character. His wonderful tales stimulated my boyish imagination and excited powerfully the spirit of adventure. I decided then and there to become a train robber.

As the days and weeks and months dragged slowly by, I grew in stature and in the knowledge of everything that was harmful and unwholesome. My cell mate's term of confinement was nearing its end, and we diligently made plans for the future. He would wait for me outside the penitentiary in New York until my term had expired; and then after making a "big haul" we would go West to start in the "game" on a large scale. We would provide ourselves with guns and the necessary ammunition, and in real dime novel style beat our way out West and become the terrors of the road.

By and by, my pal and cell mate left the penitentiary, giving me the address of a place where I could find him when I got out. After he had gone, I began to count the minutes and

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hours of the time when the prison gates would open for me also. When, at last, the day arrived and I stepped out into the world, free once more, it was with an indescribable feeling of bitterness, of hatred and revenge in my heart because of the injustice and suffering which, I felt, society had inflicted upon me. I was determined to "get even." I had learned my lesson well. I had become a criminal in spite of myself.

Little, however, did I realize that this was only the beginning, that I had passed merely through the primary school of crime, and that my secondary school and college education were still to come.

Dressed in my old clothes and a pair of prison-made shoes which had been given to me, and with a few cents in my pocket, I started out for the lower East Side of New York City to find my former cell mate and friend. At the address which he had given me on Houston Street, I found a small bakery and lunch room in a basement. When I entered the place, my pal came forward to

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greet me. He had been waiting, knowing that my term was to end that day.

According to previous plans, we went out that very night to rob a house. We both needed cash and clothing. The best and quickest way to obtain both, we thought, was to steal them. Besides, we felt that society owed us a living, and that somebody had to pay for the year we had spent in prison. We boarded the trolley for a near-by suburb.

Twenty years ago, most of the small towns near New York City had little or no police protection. The people had to protect themselves; and usually they kept watchdogs to frighten away burglars. At the first house where we attempted to get in, the dog was on the alert. Its loud bark drove us away. We tried our luck at another house near by. An open window in the rear gave us easy access to the interior. We cleaned out the sideboard in the dining room, and made off with the silverware and about twenty-seven dollars in cash which we found lying loose in a drawer.

The "haul" was so easy that after spending

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the money for shoes and clothes, we decided to try our luck once more before leaving for the West. This time we went some miles farther away from the city, to the town of Rye. When we arrived, the principal church in the town was discharging its prosperous congregation, after the midweek prayer meeting. The minister, bareheaded and smiling, stood in the large doorway shaking hands with the people and saying a few pleasant words to each member of his departing flock. In a half-interested way, we watched the scene from a distance, by the bright light of the church hall.

"Some rich people belonging to that church!" said my partner, partly to me and partly to himself.

"I'll bet that preacher is a rich guy, too," I said.

"Yes, and look at the swell house he lives in," said my pal, pointing across the lawn to the dim outline of the parsonage. "Supposin' we find out!"

This suggestion appealed to me. At any

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rate, there would be no harm in investigating. We waited until the good minister had gone home and the lights were extinguished. Then we slipped into the carriage shed immediately back of the church.

It was long past midnight when my partner and I started to work. There was a light burning in the hall adjoining the bedroom. A small window leading into the hall upstairs was partly open. A ladder we had noticed leaning against the carriage shed would reach the open window. Noiselessly ascending, we entered the house. The light of our flash lantern showed us the door leading into the minister's bedroom. This door was ajar, and we passed into the room. The minister and his wife were both sound asleep. On a chair alongside the bed we discovered the minister's trousers and vest. While I made a snatch at the vest, my partner seized the trousers. Then came the trouble! A corset belonging to the minister's wife had, it developed, been placed over the back of the chair. The trousers, which concealed it, became caught on

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the hooks of the lady's garment. It dropped to the floor, causing a quite unintentional disturbance in the peaceful slumber of the minister who, lifting his head from the pillow, demanded to know who was in the room.

Fearfully frightened, we dropped our plunder on the floor and made for the open window. When we landed on the ground, the minister's bedroom was a flood of light and, looking back, I plainly discerned two shadows moving about the room.

We took to our heels, and nothing but a bullet could have stopped us. Being unacquainted with the country roads, we continued at a fast pace straight ahead, until we found ourselves out on Rye Point, surrounded on both sides by water. Daylight had set in; and, looking down the road, we saw several men coming in our direction. Believing this to be possibly a search party in pursuit, we hastily loosened one of the many rowboats which were tied to floats along the shore, and continued our flight in the boat. We rowed hard and fast for the opposite shore, but the

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receding tide was pulling us out into Long Island Sound. We had left Rye Point about a mile astern when suddenly a motor launch shot out in our wake. Unless we could reach shore, our capture was certain.

With all the remaining strength in our bodies, we pulled for the shore; and we had almost succeeded in reaching it when several bullets from rifles in the hands of our pursuers splashed in the water close astern of our boat. Closer and closer the launch drew up, and closer and thicker the bullets splashed in the water around us. Meanwhile, however, our efforts had brought our boat to the shore. We quickly disappeared in the dense under-brush, followed by a hail of rifle bullets.

The place where we landed was part of a large estate. Completely exhausted, we staggered through the bushes to find our way out of the estate. We were crossing a lawn near the big iron entrance gate when two men jumped out from behind a large tree and fell upon my partner and made him a prisoner. Some

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employees on the estate, hearing the shots, had started to investigate, and were watching. I succeeded in getting away through the gate, however; and a few hours more saw me back in New York.

The following morning, the metropolitan papers gave a most sensational account of the "Bold Robbery at Rye." They told how the parsonage of a fashionable church had been entered by two burglars on the previous night; how the burglars had carried off a gold watch and a large sum of money belonging to the minister; how he, awakened by a noise in his bedroom, grappled with one of the intruders who, however, succeeded in making his escape through an open window; how the town constable, summoned by the pastor, took up the pursuit of the thieves, who stole a rowboat near the Milton Yacht Club; how a launch was commandeered and the pursuers continued the chase on the water; how one of the bandits was severely wounded by a bullet from the constable's rifle, and was later captured, while the other succeeded in escaping; how the watch

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and money had been found on the captured robber, who was being held for trial.

After reading this piece of exaggeration, I felt strongly tempted to journey back to Rye and give a lecture in the church on veracity. Instead, knowing that the police would be on my trail, I took a "side-door-Pullman" for the West.

CHAPTER VI

THE THIRD DEGREE

WHILE life as a tramp and travel in a box car had their disadvantages and discomforts, still I found this happy-go-lucky and haphazard existence not so unpleasant as might be expected, and exceedingly instructive. It put me in touch with the underworld in a way in which I had never known it. I was in company with all sorts and conditions of men, the flotsam of society.

It was late in the afternoon when the West Shore fast freight pulled into the yards at Hornell, New York. There we were put to the inconvenience of changing trains. Climbing down on the track, we found a police officer waiting to greet us. At the police station, our names were taken, our pockets searched, and we were locked up in the cellar. Fearing to be taken before the judge the next

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morning and sent to the rock-pile, some of the more determined and experienced spirits in the gang succeeded in breaking the lock of the cellar door, and we all escaped and jumped the first freight train which came through.

Buffalo was the next stop. There a railroad "cop" pushed open the door of our car and stuck a sawed-off shotgun in our faces, commanding us to put up our hands and climb off that train. One by one, with uplifted hands, we alighted; and in single file the officer marched us away. The justice of the peace, after carefully questioning us, decided to let us go with the advice to avoid the West Shore line and take the Nickel Plate road for the rest of our trip West. Some twenty-two hours later I arrived in the South Chicago freight yards. The Buffalo justice of the peace was right. The Nickel Plate road was easier to beat.

While wandering around in the outskirts of the city, I was attracted by a dog and pony show which was going on. The canvas men were just putting up the big tent. While I

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was idly watching the process, a big man, who turned out to be the owner of the show, came past and asked whether I would like a job tending ponies. I told the showman that I had had some experience in that line, having been a cattle tender on a steamer, and accepted the offer. I traveled with the circus for about a week. My job was to drive the two-wheeled donkey cart. The cart was in fairly good condition, but the donkey that pulled it was the most stubborn brute I had ever had to deal with. No amount of beating or coaxing would make him go any faster than a slow, peaceful walk. Consequently, my cart was always miles behind the show and several hours late in arriving at the destination. When I finally did get there, the manager would call me a stupid ass. I tried to explain that *his* stupid ass was the responsible party, and not I. At the end of the week, this sort of thing got on my nerves, and I demanded my wages. The boss, however, having made no agreement, chased me off the circus grounds. I left with no regrets.

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It was at Edgewater, a small suburb of Chicago, that I was dropped from the show. Being left without money, I decided to make a raid on some house that night.

The first house I picked out was beautifully situated on the shore of Lake Michigan. The lawn, with its clumps of shrubbery, was well kept, while the dwelling itself gave every indication that the occupant must be a person of means. So, along toward midnight, after the people had come home and gone to bed, I quietly slipped out of my hiding place behind some bushes and made for the house. I tried several rear windows, but found them locked. Then I tiptoed up on the porch, hoping to gain entrance there. Suddenly, footsteps and low voices struck my ear. I stopped, listened, and looked. Through the branches of a tree near the house, by the light of a street lamp, I saw a young fellow accompanying a girl toward the house. I had just time to slip behind a davenport standing on the porch, when the pair came up the steps, walked up to the davenport, and sat down.

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It has been said that love is blind. I believe it. This pair were lost to the world. For two solid hours I had to sit there, suffering, in a cramped-up position and listen to an exchange of gushing sentiments between the two, before the man finally brought himself to the point of saying good night. With a last kiss, he departed, and the girl rose and entered the house. I breathed a sigh of relief and started again at my interrupted work of gaining an entry.

I succeeded in getting in through one of the parlor windows. From the parlor, I had to pass through the hall in order to get into the dining room. On the hatrack hung an expensive-looking Panama hat, which I took, hanging my old cap in its place as an exchange. The drawers of the sideboard in the dining room contained nothing but plated ware, which I left undisturbed. From the pantry, my next objective, I appropriated a big roast chicken from the ice-box, and some bread and butter. Then, the first signs of dawn being visible, I left the house to walk to the city.

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From Chicago, I got passage to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as a deckhand on a lake steamer. The night on which I landed was dark and rainy; and as I was beating the streets, penniless, in search of shelter, I saw a building which I took to be a small empty hall or church. Making my way in and quietly ascending a narrow stairway, I discovered that the building was a stable on some estate. The upper floor was evidently the place where the owner kept his riding and driving outfits. A pair of expensive riding boots appealed to me especially in comparison with my old, water-soaked shoes, which I left in their place. I also found a few other small articles of value. In the early morning hours I left the stable for an investigation of the estate.

The residence, standing in the center of a well-laid-out lawn and garden, was wrapped in complete darkness. The kitchen window which I tried was locked, but a small window leading into the pantry stood open. Climbing in, I first made my way into the dining room, where I found a beautifully carved sideboard

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loaded down with solid silverware. The drawers of the sideboard, too, were filled with solid silver forks and knives and spoons. My immediate attention I gave to these, as being the easier to handle. The most valuable of the plate I carried out of the house and deposited behind some bushes. Then I returned and got the rest of the stuff on the sideboard. Making a bundle of it all, I finally departed before daybreak.

A day or two later found me back in Chicago, trying to dispose of the stolen property. I was not wise enough to melt it up, and a detective looking for the silverware chanced to be in a pawnshop on South Clark Street when I spread it out before the pawnbroker. Without resistance on my part, I was arrested. At the old Harrison Street police station a charge of burglary was lodged against me, and I was locked up to await the arrival of the Milwaukee authorities.

My appearance would in itself have caused suspicion. A boy of eighteen walking the streets of Chicago in a pair of heavy riding

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boots and wearing a fine Panama hat, and that in the early part of October, would have been enough to arouse the curiosity of any ordinary person, not to mention a Chicago sleuth. Capture in the act of trying to sell the silverware, however, was conclusive proof against me. Yet the plainclothes man who apprehended me by chance was given much praise in the Chicago newspapers for his skill and heroism in catching a dangerous "crook."

The Chicago police officials, in view of my youthfulness, did not believe my frank confession to the crime. They thought that I was shielding some gang of accomplices, and that I could not have committed the robbery without assistance. In the attempt to discover further evidence, they put me through a severe grilling.

I was taken to the police captain's room. Two husky detectives were stationed at each end of the room, while the captain sat at his desk. Being unable to extract any further information from me, he told me to march up and down the room. Each time that I turned

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around, I received a severe blow or kick from one or the other of the detectives. This is called "running the gauntlet," a mild form of the "third degree" as practiced at the famous old Harrison Street police station. Sometimes, a man "running the gauntlet" was injured for life; but that was all in the game and nobody cared a rap for an offender.

Seeing that this method of extracting information had no effect, they took me to a dark cell, where a powerful incandescent lamp flashed at short intervals into my eyes, preventing me from falling asleep during the night. This failing to produce the desired results, a hearty meal consisting of beefsteak, fried potatoes, and coffee was placed in front of my cell door. Hungry and exhausted as I was, the smell of the food almost sent me insane. The attendant who brought the tray with the food told me that if, within fifteen minutes, I was ready to tell who were my accomplices, the meal would be mine. Hunger got the best of me. I was ready to confess to anything. I told a story of the robbery in-

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volving other persons, which got me the food.

This is the common method of "the third degree," which has been more or less practiced in about every police station in the country and which still prevails in most of them to-day.

The individual who survives this sort of physical and mental torture without confessing the expected details assumed to be the truth of an affair must be of almost super-human strength of mind. I have given this incident merely to illustrate the abominable brutality and injustice of "the third degree." The press, often siding with the police authorities, passes lightly over these things with a phrase or two about "the third degree" as a necessary measure, in certain cases, for getting evidence.

In the dark Middle Ages, the Inquisition was considered by certain classes of people as a holy institution and was, if I remember history rightly, even sanctioned by the Pope. We consider that we are living in a more enlightened age; but the methods of "the third degree" do not differ greatly from the methods

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of the Inquisition. It is, in fact, a relic of those ancient times when innocent men and women were drawn and quartered and burned at the stake. It seems almost inconceivable that such a system of inflicting physical pain and mental suffering should be permitted to survive as a means of extorting information from criminals in the hands of the authorities. It is supposed to be a principle in justice that a man shall not be forced to testify against himself. The use of brute force to compel him so to testify is plain barbarism.

Furthermore, it should be realized that statements secured under the pressure of physical or mental anguish are not to be relied upon as valid evidence. The mere fact that a man may procure some favor for himself through turning state's evidence is often temptation enough to cause perjury. How much more is this true when the evidence is obtained by threats and violence and deprivation of sleep and food? The psychological strain is often worse than physical abuse, and more potent

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in subduing and breaking a man's mind and spirit.

What I am trying to argue is not that a criminal should be let off from the just consequences of an offense against society. I simply contend that society should not permit itself to make the criminal's offense a basis and a justification for offending in turn against him. The purpose of society, and the whole influence of its treatment of men in the power of the law, should be to humanize, not to brutalize an individual, even an offender.

CHAPTER VII

THE FULL PENALTY

BY the time the Chicago police got through with me, I was mighty glad to get away from their clutches. The Wisconsin authorities had dispatched a man to the Windy City, and, after going through the formality of signing the extradition papers, I started in the company of a police officer on my second journey to Milwaukee. Upon arrival there, I was given a preliminary hearing and held, under heavy bonds, for the Grand Jury. Being unable to furnish bail, I had, of course, to go to jail.

The Milwaukee county jail, like most of the public buildings in that city, was of modern construction. The cells were clean and airy, and the food, unlike that in so many other similar places in this nation, was very good and appetizing. Even the prisoners

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there were different from those with whom I had become used to associating. They seemed more intelligent. Especially do I remember five men who were locked up in the top corridor. Their ages ranged from about thirty years up to about fifty. They belonged to a gang of notorious post-office robbers who had been terrorizing the middle and northwestern states for some time past. In the eyes of the police, they were exceedingly dangerous criminals. It was my lot to be thrown in with them, the jailer doing me the honor of placing me in the same dangerous class. Possibly he thought that their society would improve my character and enlighten me in many ways.

It was some time before I was able to gain the confidence of those men and was permitted to listen to their conversation and their exciting stories of exploits and narrow escapes from capture. In the three months of my stay at the Milwaukee jail, I learned more about prisons and high-class crime than I had ever had a chance to know before. My

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teachers were considered experts in the profession of burglary and safe blowing. The oldest of them had spent half a lifetime behind prison bars. His name was known to every county sheriff in the West. He could handle the highest explosives and crack the strongest safes. In my mind, there is not the slightest doubt that if that man had devoted as much time and energy to legitimate business as he did to illegitimate work, he would be to-day a successful man instead of dying in prison as he actually did.

It was in the autumn of 1902 that I was tried and convicted. I learned then that the victim of my crime was a well-known mechanical engineer, the inventor of the Westinghouse air-brake system. When the case against me was opened, the clerk of the court read the charge, which had been changed from burglary to "entry by force and arms." I pleaded "Not guilty," because I had carried no arms and, the window having been open, I had applied no force. Moreover, my Flushing experience had taught me a lesson; and I

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had decided to insist upon a trial by jury, even with the chance of being sent to prison for a longer term. Since I was without money to pay a lawyer, the court appointed counsel for the defense. Then the jury was selected with little or no trouble from among the men examined.

The trial proceeded swiftly and smoothly, the machinery of the court working without a hitch.

There being no witnesses for the defense, the lawyer appointed by the court made a brief plea for me in view of my youth and ignorance of the technicalities of the law in pleading "Not guilty" when I was known to have committed the robbery.

"Ignorance of the law," said the prosecuting attorney in his closing address to the jury, "is no excuse in the eyes of the law in considering such a serious crime as he has committed. The public must be protected from such dangerous criminals; and the only place for them is state prison."

"Your Honor," said he, turning to the

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judge, "I recommend that the full penalty of the law be inflicted."

It took the jury just fifteen minutes to bring in a verdict of "Guilty." The judge asked me to rise; and after questioning me as to whether I had anything to say in my own defense as reason why sentence should not be passed, said:

"My boy, here in this free and glorious republic, it is every man's privilege to find his own way to hell. I sentence you to six years in state prison at hard labor."

He paused for a moment to observe the effect of his words upon me, and then turned to the jury smilingly and said: "The court is adjourned."

The spectators rose from their seats and departed, each with a last long look at me. While I was being handcuffed to a deputy sheriff, the inventor whose home I had robbed walked up to the judge and prosecuting attorney and warmly shook them by the hand.

It was dusk when I arrived at the jail, and the inmates were at supper. On seeing me

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return, they all jumped up and stood against the bars nearest the door, anxious to learn my fate.

"What'd ye get?" queried a dozen voices in unison.

"A six spot!" I replied surlily.

When they heard the detailed account of the trial and sentence, the old P. O. man said:

"Why didn't you pick up a chair and soak that judge over the bean?"

"I never thought of that," I answered, and went to my cell thinking of the chance I had missed to smash up the court.

It was early in the morning, some days later, when the sheriff came after me to take me to the State Prison at Waupun. I shall never forget the bleak November day during which the train passed through the barren country on its way north. I sat handcuffed to the sheriff and absorbed in my own thoughts, watching through the window of the car for the prison walls which were to receive me and shut me away from the world for six years.

At last it appeared in the distance, the tall

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water tower and smokestack, then the group of gray buildings with their parapets and the watch towers on the high walls. A sickening feeling took hold of me, and a lump rose in my throat. Any other place in the world, I thought, except that awful prison! The loud voice of the brakeman announcing our arrival at Waupun roused me from my reverie. The sheriff took me by the arm, and we dropped off the train to the platform. When we arrived at the prison and the numerous iron-barred gates closed behind me, I felt as though some great cavern had swallowed me up and I would never see the light of the free outside world again.

Society had fed another individual into the great iron jaws of the prison hopper. Immediately after the commitment papers had been signed by the warden, he pressed a button on his desk which set the wheels in the machinery of the hopper in motion. A heavily built man appeared, dressed in a neat, brass-buttoned uniform and armed with a heavy hickory cane loaded at one end with metal.

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This was the warden's right-hand man, the Deputy, who had charge of the inside work of the prison. A prison deputy is its disciplinarian, who enforces the rules and whose word is law, usually a stern and awe-inspiring officer.

This man took me in hand and marched me into a small enclosure at the end of a dark hall, the "reception room," the prisoners called it. There I was made to strip naked, and the deputy proceeded to search my clothing. Satisfied that I had not concealed any dangerous implements in my clothes, he took everything he found in the pockets, pencils, papers, tobacco, and so forth, and carelessly threw it into the corner of the room. The place was cold, and I was glad to be told to dress.

Then I was marched off once more, and passed through a heavy, rivet-studded, sheet-iron door into the west wing of the prison. Gallery upon gallery the narrow cells were piled on top of each other, stretching back to the end of the block or wing. The stone-flagged floor, the whitewashed brick walls,

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the iron-barred windows, the nauseating prison smell and striped suits of the prisoners took my mind back to the old King's County Penitentiary which I had left behind so recently. Here I was, again a convict, and this time for a long term of confinement.

"Fresh fish" the old timers call the new arrivals; and every time one of those stripe-clad men passed me, he gave me a sad, significant smile. They knew all about me, and also knew how long my sentence was. The Milwaukee papers, which found their way into the prison, had published a very exaggerated account of my trial and conviction.

One of the first and most important things I noticed on my arrival in Waupun was that none of the inmates spoke to each other or even laughed in the presence of an officer, as they had done at the King's County pen. The reason became obvious to me when I perused the many rules and regulations in my cell. One of the first of these rules was that a prisoner must observe complete and strict silence, at all times, throughout the prison.

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Talking, laughing, or communicating by signs or otherwise, with other convicts, was punishable by solitary confinement on bread and water, and loss of "good time," the parole time which a man earns by good conduct. Such are the rules upholding the silence system in many of our prisons to-day.

The deputy warden, who had left me in charge of the hall officer, presently returned accompanied by a "trusty" who carried a new striped suit, a pair of heavy brogans, a coarse blue shirt, and some underwear in his arms. This was my new outfit, which the state provided for every convict in prison. With this attire under my arm, I was marched across the prison yard toward the bath room. There the barbers took me in hand and shaved off all the hair from my face and head. This over, I was ordered to take a bath and put on my new uniform of black and white stripes. The suit fitted me well. Only the cap was two sizes too large for my head; but this was a small item to my jailer.

Picking up my discarded civilian clothes, I

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was once more marched off by the chief officer to the boiler room. There I had to consign my old clothing to the fire under the boilers. The average citizen who has never had to pass through a similar experience may wonder why a prisoner's clothing, no matter how good or in what condition it may be, should be burned by the prison officials. The answer is very simple. The law prescribes it. Personally, I would suggest that in states where such ridiculous legislation is still in force the law be stricken from the statute books and convicts' clothing, after careful fumigation, be shipped to some charitable institution. It would at least make the convict feel that his property is put to some useful social purpose. I remember how I felt as I stood there and watched the flames eating up my clothes, which were still quite serviceable. It seemed to me a foolish and brutal and stupid form of punishment. It is quite sufficient and proper for the State to deprive a man of his liberty if he has offended against the laws of society; but to force him to burn his own clothing, to

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destroy his own property needlessly, is a senseless emphasis of his status which long leaves a sting in his heart.

The deputy warden took me back to the hall and locked me in a cell for the remainder of the day and the following night. My feelings, as I sat there gazing at the bare, white-washed walls and the iron bars which shut me in, were difficult to describe. Looking back, I recalled my experience in court, the process of the trial, the jury which had found me guilty, the judge who sentenced me and what he had said to me in delivering sentence. Then I considered the long years ahead which I had to spend behind the gray granite walls of the prison. I felt that, even despite my offense and the fact that the State had a right to punish me for it, I had received a pretty "raw deal," that society had not treated me squarely. No attempt had been made to investigate into my case or the circumstances of my life. The more I thought over it, the more convinced I became that this prison was not the right sort of place to which to send a boy of my age.

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The signal was given for "lights out." Resentful and bitter, I threw myself on my hard cot and internally swore vengeance to everything that was orderly and lawful. Thus I began my second term in prison, awaiting my next chance for crime.

Since most crime is due to ignorance, there should be some place to which boys under twenty-one years of age, who, through hard experience, have fallen into bad ways, could be sent to learn a trade and be turned into useful members of society. As it was, I was thrown into contact with men grown old in crime, without any apparent concern for the effect.

I was guilty of a serious crime against society and sentenced for a term of years to state prison. Society was perfectly satisfied, and I had no further claim upon it. I was left to work out my salvation or damnation. The issue, in the great majority of cases under such conditions, is a foregone conclusion. The convict finds the consciousness of being a citizen killed and replaced with the conscious-

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ness of being a criminal. An outcast from society, he becomes an enemy.

Even more urgently does this experience bring home to my mind the need for a public defender. Such an officer would have inquired into my case before it came to trial and advised me in my own best interest and that of society. The facts on my side of the case would have been brought out; I would have received a square deal. Instead of receiving a state prison sentence, I would probably have been sent to the reformatory where I belonged. There I might have learned to do work which would earn for me an honest livelihood upon my release. As a man who has "been through the mill," I want to urge that in its own interest society should establish the office of public defender in every state in this republic, on the same basis as the office of public prosecutor.

It is encouraging to note that the movement thus to provide counsel for accused people who are not able to engage lawyers for themselves received support in the report of the Carnegie Foundation entitled "Justice and the Poor."

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The report states that this is "unquestionably the best method for securing freedom and equality of justice." The law assumes innocence until a man is proven guilty; but if he cannot pay any one to present his case, he is likely to be convicted. An accused man has a right to the counsel and defense of a competent attorney whose position and salary are independent of the case, just as the public has a right to a state's attorney in a similar position to defend its interests.

IN THE PIT



CHAPTER VIII

LIFE IN A CONTRACT PRISON

THE deep long blasts of the prison siren proclaimed a new day. How many times would I hear that whistle blow? Two thousand one hundred and ninety times! So I figured.

It was six o'clock. Half an hour later the doors were unlocked; and at a given signal, the cell dwellers, ~~bucket in hand~~, stepped out on the galleries and remained at attention until they received the signal to proceed. Slowly the line started, and two abreast we marched across the prison yard to a space between the wall and the prison laundry where we deposited our buckets in a straight row. Then we swung back and filed into the mess hall, a dark, damp hole in the basement of the tailor shop. On entering, the smell and gloom of the place made me feel sick. When, after the six hundred odd prisoners had been seated, the signal

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to start eating was sounded, and I tasted the food, some kind of hash, which stood before me, my whole being rebelled against it. I could not restrain myself any longer.

"Rotten!" I said, in a tone loud enough for the officer standing near by to overhear me. A snicker went down the line. The guard stepped up to my seat, and before I knew what had happened I found myself outside the mess hall face to face with the deputy warden. That worthy, with red face flushed and breath smelling of alcohol, looked at me in surprise after the officer had told him how I created a disturbance in the dining hall.

"Disturbance, eh!" exclaimed the chief officer, the red in his face changing to a purple hue. "We'll teach you something better than to disturb the tranquillity of this institution!"

I tried to explain about the hash. A vicious kick from the deputy's foot was the answer I got. Then, turning his heavy cane around to hold it by the foot, he placed the crook of it around my neck and yanked me across the yard into solitary confinement. The practice

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of yanking men by the neck with a cane was very common in prisons of the Middle West where canes were substituted for the police club.

The solitary cells in the Wisconsin State Prison were situated on level ground in the hospital block. The walls and floor were of concrete construction. A small, heavily barred window facing the yard admitted the only air and light. Steam pipes underneath the floor for heating often made the floors so hot that men confined in the cells could not stand on them for any length of time without having their feet burned. A bare board served as a bed at night. No blankets were provided. A cup and bucket completed the furniture. Besides the iron-barred cell door, there was a "blind" door or shutter which served to keep out air and to prevent communication with other cells. There were six of these solitary confinement cells at the time of my imprisonment; and they were never empty.

Before I was put into "solitary," I was forced to strip naked, and any contraband ar-

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ticles, such as tobacco and matches, which prisoners sometimes procure secretly, were confiscated. Shoes, belt, suspenders, and handkerchief were taken away; and the only clothing I was permitted to wear was my underwear, socks, shirt and trousers. Then I was thrust into the cell and handcuffed by both wrists to the iron bars of the door.

It was now seven o'clock, and I could hear the steady tramp of the prisoners marching from the mess hall to the work-shops. The deputy, after he had clicked the handcuffs on me, said in his most sarcastic way:

"A good dose of this kind of medicine will do you good. It will cure you of your rebellious spirit as it has cured so many others like you before. You will eat the food that is set before you and do what you are told to do. Young fellows like you must have their lessons knocked into their heads with a club—and we either *make* you or *break* you!"

With this admonition, he slammed the "blind" door and I was left alone.

"So," I said to myself, "this is the way they

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cure the 'fresh fish,' that have enough life left in their bodies to wiggle." I recalled the words of the judge: "In this free and glorious republic it is every man's privilege to find his own way to hell." This, indeed, was hell enough.

Throughout that day, not a soul came near me. It was not until after the whistle blew at six o'clock in the evening and the inmates had been locked in their cells that the night captain came and took the handcuffs off and gave me a cup of water and a slice of bread to eat.

Six long days I suffered in that hole, until I could bear it no longer. Half crazy with hunger, I begged the deputy warden to let me out. He finally consented, but not until after I had promised him to "behave myself in future."

Like all the new arrivals, I had been placed in the second grade. A man in that grade was entitled to certain privileges, such as to write one letter and receive a visit each month, besides being permitted to attend chapel serv-

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ices every Sunday morning. From this grade a man could, after six months of good behavior, advance to the first grade, with increased privileges. The first-grade prisoners were distinguished by a dark gray suit and the second grade men by the striped clothing. There was, however, another grade, the third grade. Prisoners in that grade were deprived of all privileges, and ate their meals in their cells. They wore deep red suits which distinguished them from the rest of the inmates of the prison. They were the outcasts, the solitary men, considered unfit even for association with other convicts.

In that grade I was placed after I came out of solitary confinement. Personally, I did not mind the loss of privileges or the eating of my meals in my cell; but that dark red suit—it made me as mad as a bull! The feeling of shame and degradation which the wearing of red gave me soon wore off, however, especially as there were other men wearing it with me. With the loss of that shame there likewise passed away the little sense of self-re-

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spect which up to that time had remained in me.

After three months of good conduct, I was automatically promoted back to the second grade and allowed to change my red suit for one of black and white stripes. Six months later I got into "gray" in the first grade. The effect of the experience of wearing red, however, never wholly passed away.

On the day after my release from solitary confinement, I passed through the Bertillon system of taking measurements, and received the number by which I was to be known from then on. That same day I was assigned to the knitting shop to knit cheap socks for sale to the public.

A knitting company with offices in Chicago held the contract at the Wisconsin State Prison at that time, and had established a large knitting mill there, whereby some five hundred of the state's prisoners were given employment. The contractors paid the state a certain sum of money, for which each prisoner in their employment was to produce a certain

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amount of work each day. If the prisoner failed to produce the stated amount of work, or "task," as it is called, the state was the loser. On the other hand, for any excess production, a bonus was offered. The warden, naturally, tried to get as much work out of the prisoners as possible.

In the shop where I worked, there were about seventy men, each man operating three knitting machines. The daily output of one set of machines, working nine hours a day, was on an average twenty dozen pairs of socks, the daily task of each man. Failure to perform this task resulted in punishment. For the average man to stand on his feet nine hours a day and to give his undivided attention to this task was hard enough. Add to this the lack of exercise, poor food, the grinding monotony of prison life and the constant knowledge that a pair of watchful eyes were always upon him, and you will form some idea of the deteriorating effect which such a system has upon a man's mind and health. The constant driving and grinding sent many a man into a

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decline which ended in consumption; and most of them were worked until they actually collapsed. During the six years of my stay in Waupun, it not infrequently happened that prisoners went out of their minds, and started to throw things around the shop. In such cases, the officer's cane descended upon the man's head; and the unconscious man was then dragged out into the "cooler," or solitary detention cell.

I distinctly remember two such cases; and one of the men thus maltreated died a few days later in the prison hospital. Another case worth mentioning happened about a year before my release. One of the prisoners working in the dye house got his sleeve caught in the belt which drove the big churning vat. Since there was no safety net or guard, the poor fellow had his arm literally torn out of the socket. I saw that man carried bleeding and unconscious across the yard into the hospital. An outside surgeon had to be called in to assist the prison physician in saving the man's life. I doubt if the state ever paid him

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a cent in compensation for the loss of his right arm.

But, I hear some one say, are there no boards of visitors going through the institutions, and have the prisoners no right to appeal to the government?

The board of control is appointed by the Governor of the state, and the various members are all well-meaning and honorable men who visit the prison not less than once every three months. At the quarterly meeting of the board of control, the warden submits his report to the board. No one usually thinks of questioning the warden's report; and the convict who dares to put in an application, to which he has a right, to see the board and make complaints, is promptly set down as a marked man. His time at the prison is not very pleasant, and he may thank his stars if he leaves the place with a whole skin and unbroken bones.

As I said before, the Chicago knitting concern was employing at their fine money-making plant at Waupun about 500 prisoners.

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Each convict turned out on an average 240 pairs of socks a day. That brought the daily output of the plant up to 12,000 pairs a day, or 3,780,000 pairs of socks a year. Personally, I turned out 378,000 pairs of socks during my term in Waupun. This, allowing one cent a pair for labor, meant \$3,780.00. Now, my maintenance during those years was estimated at seven cents a day, the average for each prisoner. Thus, my keep cost the State of Wisconsin \$122.75, for I got out a few months early. Deducting this amount from my earnings, there was left a net profit of \$3,657.25 to the state as payment for my crime, calculated even at the low rate of one cent a pair for socks.

This estimate, however, does not make allowance for the immense profits which the knitting company of Chicago made out of my enforced labor and that of the other prisoners. The hose manufactured in the prison were a cheap grade of cotton goods bought mainly by farmers and workingmen. They were distributed through a few large Chicago mail or-

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der houses at about ten cents a pair. They actually cost the manufacturers, inclusive of material and labor, about thirty cents a dozen. From these few facts and figures, it will be seen that the merchants handling such prison-made goods also made a handsome profit.

The effect of the marketing of prison-made goods on the business of the small manufacturers may be imagined, as may also the effect of the flooding of the market with cheap prison-made goods upon the wages of workers in outside factories. The competition of independent plants with prison-made goods forces thousands of working girls in such factories and sweat shops to exist on starvation wages. The prisoner feels that he is a party to the crime of contract labor, although a forced party. He has the bitter realization that the work which he is forced daily to do, because of the conditions under which it is done and the low prices which it makes possible and the low wage system which is consequently enforced in outside plants, is taking work out of the hands of women.

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The main responsibility for the continuation of the system and for all of the human degradation and suffering which it causes, rests upon society—the community at large, whose indifference tolerates such injustice.

CHAPTER IX

OUT AGAIN

AT last the time arrived when once more I was to step out into the world a free man. Free, indeed, I was; but not the same boy I had been when I entered Waupun six years before. Both from the books in the prison library, many of which I had read assiduously, and from conversation with other inmates of the prison, which we contrived to carry on in spite of the rule of silence and non-communication, I had learned many new things.

The one thing which I had not been taught was a trade suitable for a man. True, I had learned to knit socks; but that was work which belonged to women and girls. So, when I left the prison, my usefulness to society was simply zero. Moreover, the bitterness and the hatred against society which I harbored had increased with the years of confine-

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ment and had soured my temper and hardened my heart and perverted my mind against everything good and wholesome in human nature. With such feelings I was turned out of Wau-pun on January 27, 1907, one of the red letter days in the twenty-four years of my life up to that time.

The Sunday prior to my release I had attended chapel services for the last time—more, however, to get out of my cell than to listen to the speaker. The prison chaplain, a man whom the prisoners felt to be in sympathy with the prison officials rather than with them, announced the speaker of the morning after the usual prayer and singing service. He said that he had the honor of introducing to us a man who was the friend of every prisoner in the United States, a man who was ready to lend a helping hand to those in need of assistance upon their release from prison. The speaker was Superintendent of the Central Howard Association, with offices in Chicago.

After explaining the policy of the Association and what it stood for, the speaker made a

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strong appeal to the men to obey the rules and regulations of the prison and to follow the counsel of their spiritual adviser, the chaplain. The motto of the Association, he continued, was: "A friend in need is a friend indeed." If any man in the audience should come to him upon being released from prison, he declared, he would find him a position and be a friend to him.

These words appealed to me very strongly. What I really needed was a friend. I resolved then and there to go to Chicago and to see the secretary at the Central Howard Association. It gave me an object and a definite place to go on my release. With this purpose in mind I returned to my cell to work out the few remaining days of my sentence.

It was a bitter cold day with a seventy-mile gale and a blizzard to greet me when I stepped outside the prison gates. The whiteness of the snow almost blinded my eyes, as yet unaccustomed to the light. The cheap prison suit and the thin overcoat which the State had given me were not very adequate protection

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against the driving snow and biting wind. In the half-mile walk from the prison to the station the paper soles of my new shoes were soaked through and began to peel off.

At the railroad station I exchanged the ticket for Milwaukee, which the state had given me to return me to the city where I was tried, for a ticket to Chicago, paying the balance of the fare out of the fifteen dollars which I received on release. Late that night I arrived at Chicago, and for the first time in six years I ate a real meal and slept in a real bed.

The following morning, according to my plans, I promptly started out to find the Central Howard Association. It was early when I arrived at the office, and I had to wait for some time till the secretary made an appearance. When at last he arrived, he greeted me with a smile and asked me to come into his private office. Seated at a spacious mahogany roll-top desk, he questioned me closely concerning my past record and my plans for the future. I told him that I was both friendless and home-

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"What direction?" he queried, counting the money.

I hesitated a few seconds, and then said, "East."

He handed me a ticket to Fort Wayne, Ind. Arriving there the following day, I secured a job as porter in a saloon. I held this job for several weeks until one day I got into an argument with the bartender over a bottle of rum which he wrongfully accused me of stealing. The boss took the price of the bottle out of my wages and gave me the sack. I felt that I had been robbed again. The money I had earned took me as far as Buffalo. There I washed dishes in a restaurant until I had enough money to make the jump to New York.

It was in the latter part of March when I finally reached the metropolis. The reason why I had kept straight since my release from Waupun was not because I intended to lead an honest life, but because I thought it expedient to do so. Besides, the long years of monotony and prison fare had both shaken my nerves and injured my digestion. I needed a rest

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and decent food. Back in New York I felt more at home than in any other place. The noise of the "L" and the surface cars had a familiar fascination for me, just as the sound of the ocean has for a sailor. After all, New York seemed to me the only place where a man could live and mind his own business. As long as he has the price of what he wants, he can get it and nobody asks him any questions.

I had not been in New York very long, however, before the lure of its underworld dragged me back into old haunts on the lower East Side. Walking into the coffee room on East Houston Street one night, I found my old pal and cell mate of six years before, sitting in the back room playing poker. When he saw me, I thought he would break his neck trying to get out from behind the table. It was the first hearty welcome I had had.

We had so much to tell each other that my old pal forgot all about his card game. He told me how, after his capture on the estate on Long Island Sound in our escapade of years ago, he had been locked up in the White Plains

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jail and by putting the whole blame of the burglary upon me succeeded finally in being acquitted of guilt. During the past years, he had restricted his activities mainly to the profession of gambling. Sitting so much at poker tables had impaired his health, he hinted; and he would look forward to occupation offering more wholesome exercise in the open air. I took his hint, and we agreed to meet on the following day and talk things over. Our next meeting in the dingy back room of the old bakery and coffee house was fraught with many possibilities for the future.

It was a clear moonlight night and the smell of spring was in the air when we started out for our first new "job" together. The April sun had brought forth the young sprouts of the spring flowers and melted the ice in the ground, leaving deep puddles of mud behind; but the night was still chilly and we wrapped our overcoats tightly around us as we slowly made our way through the thickets and across the lawn surrounding the beautiful country

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house overlooking Great Neck Bay, which we had selected for our attempt. My partner, leading the way, pointed to a small window in the rear of the house and said to me in a hushed voice:

“That’s where we are going to get in!”

The window was about eight or ten feet from the ground; but by using my hands and shoulders in place of a ladder, my partner had no difficulty in reaching it. He made his entry; and went and opened the kitchen door for me. Once inside the house, we immediately found our way through the kitchen into the dining room. There was a beautifully carved sideboard, literally loaded with shining silverware, mostly of Tiffany make. By the light of our flash lamps, we set to work packing the stuff together, and carried it out of the house. Then we went back for some more. Opening the big drawers, we found them filled with nicely arranged silver knives and forks and spoons also bearing the Tiffany mark. Without making any noise, we pulled out the drawers and left the house with them. Outside, we

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packed together our plunder and left before the stars disappeared from the sky.

Briefly, this was the story of our first new team burglary, the most successful haul we had ever made. Yet, while the silver must have been of very great value to the persons owning it, the price we got after it was melted down was comparatively small. The returns on burglary were usually small for the risks, smaller than uninformed people would imagine. However, the money kept us from going hungry and from the necessity of doing any hard work for a few weeks, until it gave out and we had to make plans for another "job" in the dark.

We selected a damp, drizzly night for our next marauding expedition. It was close to midnight when we arrived at the place we had picked out. The drizzle had soaked us to the skin and we were in a bad temper. We stopped outside a fine residence where some workmen had been making repairs on the outside of the porch. Their ladders were still standing against the building, making entry by the

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second-story windows an easy matter. We found the window to which we climbed locked. To break the lock was little trouble; but the noise of the snapping catch, it seemed to us, could be heard a mile away. Hastily we entered, then shut the window behind us. For a few minutes we stood and listened for any possible sound from inside or outside the house. None coming, we started to look around by the glare of our flash lights. The room we were in, elegantly appointed, seemed to be the boudoir of the lady of the house. The immaculate, lace-covered bed had not been occupied. Opening the mirror doors of the closet, we found hundreds of dollars' worth of silk dresses, many of them apparently hardly used. The walls of the room also held many valuable-looking paintings. Going on, we entered a larger room, containing two big beds, evidently the main sleeping room.

There was an open fireplace with gas logs in it. We wondered if the gas had been turned off, as the house was evidently unoccupied. I opened the valve while my partner struck a

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match. Pop! and the log-shaped pipes were a mass of blue flame, softly illuminating the whole room. At the further end of the bedroom was a large closet set into the wall. We opened it and found a wealth of silk pajamas, shirts, nightgowns, white summer suits, and other wearing apparel hanging on the racks. Each of us selected a suit of silk pajamas and laid them out on the beds. Then we proceeded to take off our wet clothes, hung them up to dry, and tried what it felt like to go to bed in silk. By this time the room had become pleasantly warm. We were both tired. So we were both soon sound asleep.

A poke in the ribs from my partner made me jump out of bed. A glance at the clock showed us that there was little time to lose, if we wanted to get dressed and out of the house before the workmen came. It was six o'clock in the morning. We had no time to look for any plunder. My partner hastily snatched up the silk pajamas we had so soundly slept in and packed them together under his arm. On our way out I succeeded in taking down one of

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the oil paintings from its frame on the wall of the lady's bedroom and carried it away with me. At the foot of the ladder we hastily wrapped our plunder together and hurried away. On the Mamaroneck road, a short distance from the house, we passed several of the workmen on their way to continue the repairs on the house we had slept in for the night.

The New York evening papers, ever ready to print something sensational, came out with big headlines about the burglary. The beautiful summer house of a great drygoods merchant had been entered by burglars, according to the account, and thoroughly ransacked from attic to cellar. The marauders had made themselves at home, and after occupying the beds in the main bedroom had made off with thousands of dollars' worth of plunder. Tracks in the road, said the papers, indicated that they had used a moving van. A painting representing an English hunting scene, which was taken, was claimed to have been worth five thousand dollars. An art dealer gave me five dollars for it a few days later.

CHAPTER X

BURGLARY AS A PROFESSION

BY now I was fully committed to burglary as a way of gaining a livelihood. I had started upon a course of crime which was to last for some time, until it involved me in trouble again.

The last "job" failing to meet our expenses, my pal and I were obliged to make plans for another raid in a different locality. My partner, being fairly well acquainted with the shores of Long Island, suggested the Great South Bay section as the next place of operation. Accordingly, we set out for Bay Shore, Long Island, where we arrived in the evening. Walking about the place, we selected several pretty summer homes which looked quite promising. The early spring had brought some of the city families out into the country for week-end "house-warming" parties, and now a few of the summer homes at Bay Shore were

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occupied. We made two unsuccessful attempts before we struck luck.

The third call we made was at a very pretty home situated in the center of a well-kept estate surrounded by a picket fence. A rear window, left partly open, invited us to enter. Once inside the house, we opened the front door, to make our exit more easy and swift if occasion should arise. Then we stepped into the dining room and examined the family silverware on the sideboard. To our satisfaction, the stuff bore the "Sterling" mark. We had started to pack things together, when the rays of my companion's flashlight fell upon a large vase standing in the center of the dining table, filled with cut flowers. It was of exquisite workmanship and solid silver. This represented too much value to leave behind, so we packed it in with the rest of the things, and left, taking care to close the door behind us so that no sneak thieves could get in.

The report of our Great South Bay burglary was, as usual, much exaggerated by the newspapers. As it came out of the melting pot, the

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silver was actually worth only one third of the reported value.

After such a period of several burglaries in the homes of wealthy people, the police naturally became very active. It became apparent to me that unless I went on a sea voyage, my health might again become impaired by another long period of enforced indoor living. I decided to make a trip to the West Indies; and a few days later found me on a boat bound for Kingston, Jamaica, and Central America. It was the latter part of June, 1907, when I again landed in New York. Several murders committed during my absence were absorbing the attention of the police force, so I considered it safe to go to work again.

The press was devoting considerable space on the society pages to the annual horse show which was to take place at a fashionable residence park near New York. The big day was to be Saturday, June 25, and the exclusive millionaire colony was to be crowded to full capacity. I gave the accounts my serious attention, not because of any interest in fine

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horses, but because of the possible opportunity to secure some of what I considered to be superfluous and unearned wealth.

With this purpose in mind, I set out that Saturday afternoon for the park. On my arrival there, I found that a fifteen-foot barbed wire fence surrounded the park, making it difficult for any uninvited guest to get in. Walking some distance around, away from the gate, I found a spot where I could get through between the wires, and when nightfall came I was able to get inside the park unobserved.

The night was warm and dark. The big club house near the lake was crowded with people eating and drinking and having a general good time. The pretty homes of the wealthy park owners, standing around on the slopes of the hills which surrounded a lake, were all gayly decorated and brightly illuminated with Chinese and Japanese lanterns. Peacefully I strolled around, feasting my eyes and enjoying the vari-colored lights and listening to the sweet strains of a violin from an open window.

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It was long past midnight when I prepared to make an investigation of the premises which I had selected for the attempt. First I went to the private dock, and made a boat ready for use. Then I went up and inspected the house. Of all the places I had ever broken into, this was the largest and most beautiful and by far the easiest of access. Almost every window in the place had been left wide open! All I had to do was to climb in.

Adhering to an old habit, I selected the kitchen window. Dirty dishes and wine glasses and empty bottles stood all about, and also in the butler's pantry. In the latter was a telephone which I thought it would be wise to disconnect. So I cut the wires. This precaution and the number of empty bottles gave me confidence. I had a bite to eat and a drink, and then set to work.

The large table in the dining room was just as the guests had left it. Partly filled glasses and champagne bottles stood among flowers and silver fruit dishes, while silver knives and forks and spoons were scattered all over the

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table. Stepping out into the kitchen, I discovered a large wash basket, which I carried into the dining room. Laying hold of everything valuable on the table, I packed it into the basket.

Satisfied with my clearing of the table, I proceeded to clear off the sideboard also, taking care not to overlook anything. By the time I had finished setting things to rights, the basket was pretty well filled with all sorts of silverware. I carried it down to the lake and put it on board the boat. Then I went back for more.

On a sofa in the drawing-room I had noticed a black case. Thinking that it might be useful to me in carrying some of the small silverware away, I took the box along with a few other things, hurried down to the landing float, and swiftly rowed away. Daylight was breaking, but a heavy mist covered the surface of the lake, shutting off view of the shore. I lost my bearings; and instead of rowing across the lake as I intended to do, I rowed down till I landed at the narrow outlet. Something told

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me I was lost. I had not the slightest idea how to get out of the park. It was getting late and there was no time to lose.

Hastily I selected the small pieces of silver, which I intended to take along with me, and concealed the rest in the bushes. Then I opened the black case, and to my surprise discovered two beautiful violins inside. One of these, I thought, must be the instrument which I had heard the evening before. I decided to keep one. The other I threw into the bushes. Then I packed my silver in the space thus made and hurried away.

After much walking and climbing through the woods and over rocks, I finally got out on the main road. At the nearest railroad station I took the train for New York.

The following day I got rid of the silver; but the violin I kept, hoping to practice and learn to play on it myself. The New York papers created quite a sensation with reports of the "Daring Robbery." They said that the burglars, after helping themselves freely to

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champagne, carried away over three hundred pounds of the family silver!

The robbery was the first in the history of the park colony. A searching party discovered the silver hidden in the woods, the papers said, and also one of the two Stradivarius violins valued together at \$15,000. The instrument recovered was valued at \$10,000. I had kept a \$5,000 violin and thrown away one worth twice as much!

The haul had netted me enough to make it possible to take a short vacation. Besides, I considered it wise to lie low for a while. However, a few weeks later, financial needs forced me to begin to prospect around once more.

In describing the next affair which I planned, I want now to render some slight return in terms of a warning against conditions which make such operations too easy. I selected a small Connecticut town; and strolling through the residential section one hot afternoon I saw a fine house with shutters all closed. Walking up to the front door, I pushed the button of the electric bell. No one answered. I rang

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again and again. Then, going around to the back of the house, I lifted up the cellar doors and walked down the stairs. The door leading in at the foot was locked; but it was not difficult to break the lock and walk in. The dust-covered furniture upstairs showed that the family must have been away for some time. Beginning in the attic, I ransacked the whole house down to the cellar. In a suitcase which I found upstairs I carried away the things of greatest value. The next day I made another trip and got some more. All told, I paid three visits to that house, in as many days, without arousing suspicion in the neighborhood.

I have told this story to indicate how careless people often are. This particular house stood between two others; and some of the neighbors must have seen me come or go. Yet no one paid the slightest attention to me. The neighbors had not been informed of the owner's absence, probably; and did not think anything of the sight of a man moving around the house in the daytime, doubtless assuming him to be a workman.

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Aside from notifying the police and people in the neighborhood of any long absence, house owners should install some system of automatic alarm to prevent just that kind of daylight robbery. Had the police in the town been on the alert, it would have been impossible for me to succeed in the affair, of course.

The right kind of protection demonstrated itself not long afterwards. Not far from Irvington-on-Hudson stood the fine mansion of an Italian banker. The magazine section of one of the Sunday newspapers had given a description of the banker's home, together with a number of pictures of the exterior and interior. My partner, whom I had not seen for some time, showed me the article and suggested that there would be a good place to call.

So, one night we took a trip up the river as far as Irvington and located the mansion on a hill. We had no difficulty in getting inside the estate, and lay low for the proper time to come to make the attempt on the house. Before extinguishing the lights, the butler inspected the windows to see whether they were locked—so

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we thought at the time. Having given the occupants enough time to go soundly asleep, we sneaked around to the rear of the house. There the growl of a big watchdog, fortunately chained, warned us that we had no business to be there at that time of night. For some reason, he did not start to bark. So we went around to the other side of the house to try our luck there.

A large low window opening on the dining room was convenient for our purposes; but we found it locked. My partner, however, being handy with tools, inserted a short crowbar between the sill and the sash of the window and pried it upward. In the stillness of the night, the crash of the bursting lock seemed terrific. We dropped down and slipped behind some bushes to await the effect of the disturbance. Nothing happened. The noise had not stirred up even the watchdog.

The first stage of the work having been passed successfully, we started on the second stage. Going back, we began to raise the window, slowly and carefully. It was almost

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high enough to slide through when—Bang! something went off. Up on the roof somewhere, a gong that sounded as if it were the size of a washtub started to ring furiously and without intermission. Around the other side of the house the watchdog began to bark.

We stood dazed, gazing spellbound at nothing. Then a light flashed up in one of the second-story windows. That brought us to our senses. We started to run while the running was good; and we kept on running until our legs got tired—but we could still hear that gong! It could be heard a mile away, I believe. The terrible noise of that burglar alarm gave us the worst scare we ever got in our lives, and sent us home empty-handed for the first time in all the nights on which we had set out for plunder.

CHAPTER XI

THE HUMORS OF HOUSEBREAKING

BESIDES the great risks and dangers involved, there are often humorous incidents which make the experiences of a burglar interesting, if not instructive. In my short checkered career I gained admission without invitation to the houses of quite a number of New York's "Four Hundred," and observed many things which under ordinary circumstances I would never have had the opportunity to learn.

For instance, I remember one night when my partner and I were the uninvited guests at the castlelike home of a late Ambassador to Great Britain. The great mansion was unoccupied, the owner being in England representing the people of the United States of America. Consequently, we felt that he could not resent even an undiplomatic visit from us in time to make the situation embarrassing.

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The mere idea of getting into the place and prowling around its great halls appealed to us. So we forced an entry, and opened the immense iron gate leading to the entrance hall in order to make exit easy in case the caretaker's attention should be drawn to the house. The hall was lined with suits of ancient armor, and the great stairway leading up to the second story was a work of art. Magnificent portraits decorated the tapestry-covered walls.

Our search of the ground floor being fruitless, we went upstairs and made a careful examination of the exquisitely furnished rooms there. In a large bathroom we found a man's coat; but my partner, going through its pockets, found nothing but a number of letters.

With the exception of a phonograph standing on a table in one of the upper rooms, we could see nothing in that whole costly establishment which was of value to us. We could not walk off with a suit of medieval armor or a mahogany bedstead.

In disgust, we started to leave, when I suggested to my partner sarcastically that since

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there was no silver mine in sight we might at least have some canned music to cheer us up. Stepping into the room containing the phonograph, we inserted one of the cylinders, wound up the machine, and started it going. The strains of "In the Sweet By and By" came floating out and filled the room. We tried another record, hoping to hear something different. "Nearer, my God, to Thee!" was the song which burst from the horn of the machine.

Looking through the box in the hall for something more lively, we found that the fifty records were all sacred music. I switched off the lights. The phonograph we carried along with us, intending to present it to the old Bowery Mission, which was our regular "hangout" when broke. It was against principle to leave empty handed. However, an old Hebrew offered me five dollars for the machine, and we gladly let him have it. It was all we got from the raid on the house of our chief diplomatic representative.

One night I went out alone on an expedition

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which took me to a place between Mamaroneck and Rye. On a small peninsula running a short distance out into Long Island Sound there stood the beautiful villa of a wealthy New Yorker. It was at twilight that I drew near the shore and saw the owner, with a party of friends, going aboard his yacht. Evidently, I thought, a fishing party, bound on a trip up the Sound. The boat cast loose from its moorings presently and swung her bow out toward the Sound and moved off. Gradually it grew dark.

I looked around for a place in which to crawl and wait for midnight, when all the servants in the house would be asleep. On the beach, facing the house, stood a small bathing pavilion. I climbed up, and from the platform I could command a very good view of the main entrance and the conservatory. There was not a soul to be seen; but the house itself was brightly lighted. It must have been near midnight, and I was on the point of leaving my perch in disappointment, when suddenly a powerful motor car came shooting around the

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curving drive and stopped in front of the door. A man and woman alighted as the chauffeur opened the door of the automobile, and entered the house. This, I thought, is what the servants were staying up for—the return of the mistress. I decided to wait a little longer. I waited and waited. The car still stood in front of the door, and the driver had gone to sleep on the seat.

Most of the lights had been extinguished, with the exception of one or two in the conservatory. It was almost two o'clock and I began to grow impatient. Still the car with its sleeping driver remained at the door. The longer I waited, the more determined I became to get into that house. It was after four o'clock in the morning when the lights finally went out, the late guest descended the front steps, awoke his driver, entered his car and drove away.

I made for the house once more. On my first trip, I had noticed an open cellar window. Entering by that window, I found my way upstairs. The interior of the house was im-

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mense. As a precaution I opened the back door, and then, after much groping in the dark, I finally arrived in the drawing-room. Examining and picking up the most valuable things I could find by the way, I came to the doors leading into the dining room. By this time it was almost broad daylight, and I had no more time to lose. Hastily pulling the big sliding doors apart, I found myself facing across the room, a red-nosed butler helping himself to an eye opener from a bottle on the sideboard! With his glass half way to his lips, he stared at me with the face of a ghost. I was looking for no argument with a man who drank so late—or so early in the morning. So I quietly but firmly closed those doors again and hurried out through the hallway and departed.

No hue and cry was raised as I left the house; neither was there any report in the newspapers about the affair. After so many years, I still wonder what that tippling butler thought and felt, and whether any one else besides himself ever knew about my uninvited

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visit. Maybe he was not quite sure, himself, whether I was really there or not.

Shortly afterwards I had an experience which, except for a mixture of audacity and good luck, might have been tragic for me instead of comic. It happened in the small hours of a summer morning at a house in Long Branch. One of the ground floor windows had been left ajar; and since it was too high for me to reach, I secured a ladder which lay by an outhouse near by. This made my entrance easy. It being late, I hurriedly packed together a few pieces of silver in the dining room and made my way back to the window. Looking down, I saw a police officer waiting for me at the bottom of the ladder! Fortunately, however, he stepped around the corner of the house a moment for observation of the other side of the house. I dropped my booty on the floor and slid down the ladder. With drawn revolver, I waited for the officer to reappear around the corner of the house. He came, and I stuck my gun under his nose and commanded him to hold up his hands. He

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threw up his arms eagerly. Then I proceeded to take his own gun out of his hip pocket.

The poor fellow was frightened almost to death. Having secured his revolver, I was starting to slip it into my pocket, when the policeman, thinking of his own dilemma, begged me to help him out of the mess he was in. He asked me to extract the cartridges from his revolver and throw the empty weapon as far away as I could. I was then to hand him two cartridges, and run as fast as my legs would carry me. He promised not to fire his revolver until I was out of sight. In this way, he said, he would keep his place on the force, and I would be safe.

I understood his situation, and agreed. He even advised me what road it would be safest for me to take. When I had gone about half a mile, I heard two pistol shots behind me, in the direction of the house behind me and so I knew that everything was all right. Both my would-be captor and I had saved the day and avoided consequences which would have been unpleasant for each of us. I presume the

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papers duly carried the story, the next day, of how the officer tried to capture an escaping burglar, firing two shots after the fleeing criminal but failing to hit his man. I did not grudge him the credit.

It was in the winter of 1908 that I had another experience which deserves mention here. On the outskirts of a small town on the ocean shore stands the fine country home of a wealthy New York banker. At the time I speak of the owners of the country place had gone to their city home, and the place was carefully boarded up for the winter.

My mind had been on this mansion for some time, and thinking to make a good haul I tackled it on a cold winter night. It was hard work to remove one of the heavy wooden shutters which protected the windows from unwelcome visitors. The inside of the house looked like a barn. The furniture had all been moved out of place and the pictures taken off the walls. On the sideboard in the big dining room a large sign notified me:

“Our silverware is stored in the vaults of

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The Columbia Storage Company, New York."

In the basement I discovered a heavy iron door barring the entrance into the wine cellar. The ice box was empty. Up in the attic stood big empty trunks and boxes which once might have contained valuable things. Every drawer in the kitchen had been carefully cleaned out. Even the coal was gone from the coal bin and the potatoes from the potato bin. There was not a thing in that whole house which it was worth my while to take along, except a set of false teeth! These I found in a bureau drawer in one of the upper rooms, together with a bottle of bay rum and a hair switch which some servant must have forgotten to take along with her when she cleaned the room.

The false teeth I took, not because I needed them, for my own were always good and ready for all emergencies, but for the gold the set contained. Moreover, it was against my convictions to go away from any place empty handed. The bottle of bay rum and the hair switch I left behind. The two dollars I received for the set of false teeth seemed ridic-

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ulous enough, when compared with the trouble to which I had gone to get them.

Imagine my surprise, consequently, when I read in a newspaper some time later that burglars who had entered the beautiful country home had carried off everything in the house, leaving only the bed and the ice box behind.

CHAPTER XII

MY MOTIVE

THE emotions which rise from the heart are beyond human control. Ordinarily, a man can no more control his own heart than he can change the color of his eyes or the shape of his nose. Motives are the basis of everything we do, good or bad. If our motives are right, we will do right; if they are wrong, we are bound to do wrong. The problem is to reach the heart and to make a change there in the emotions ruling it.

Let me explain what I mean. While robbing other people's houses, I was perfectly conscious of the wrong I was doing, quite as much as of the great risks which I was running of getting caught or killed. Indeed, my own common sense told me that I could not keep up this kind of work indefinitely and that, sooner or later, I was bound to be sent back to prison. More-

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over, the work of a burglar requires not only a certain amount of skill and of careful planning and scheming, but also a great deal of nerve and determination in order to persist in it. No sooner had I carried out one burglary successfully, or failed through some unforeseen event, than it became necessary to make plans for another expedition.

Why, the reader may ask, did I not devote my time, energy, and thought to legitimate work, and by so doing become a useful member of the community, instead of using my powers in such dangerous business? What was the motive behind it all? What made it worth while to me?

The answer to these questions is that I strongly wanted to get even with society for the wrong which I felt it had done me. This spirit of revenge, instilled into me by the years of suffering and ill-treatment behind prison walls, pervaded my whole nature. As I have said in a preceding chapter, I left prison with a feeling of bitterness and of hatred in my heart, which made me like a wild animal. Al-

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most every man with whom I came in contact while in prison expressed that same feeling, as the result of the system. He was "going to get even" and "make somebody pay" for his punishment and suffering.

Is society altogether without blame, it may be asked, if criminals are bred in its prisons, when it takes boys of tender age and throws them among hardened criminals and then turns them out, not better, but far worse than they were before, with little opportunity open to get an honest living? If our prisons are meant as places of confinement and punishment solely, places where a man is taken to be broken in body and mind and spirit, then they are excellently designed to serve this purpose without fail. If they are intended to be places of reformation and education, then most prisons of to-day are worse than useless. They are breeding places for anarchy and violence, a danger to society and to established government, teaching not citizenship but sedition.

While the spirit of revenge was the chief

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motive that urged me on in crime, there were other factors contributing. An important one was the difficulty for an ex-convict to secure employment, and the despair engendered by the almost universal refusal of honest work wherever his past is known. This is a strong influence contributing to the desire for revenge on the part of many a man, the sense of being denied a "square deal" driving him back to seek retaliation through criminal means.

With these darker motives went the love for adventure, which makes men do all sorts of foolish things. My nervous disposition craved excitement just as some people crave alcohol. My nocturnal exploits satisfied this craving, as well as gave vent to the love for dramatic adventure, for its own sake, which is a part of the nature of every normal boy and young man. The sense of being shut out by society from all normal lines of activity simply served to intensify these instincts and increase their force.

The proceeds of my unlawful profession were very small in comparison with the great chances I had to take to get them. The profits

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of burglary are greatly exaggerated in the imagination of ordinary people who know nothing about it. Certainly, no business man considering the risks in contrast with the gains would say that burglary justifies itself as an economic enterprise, as such things are ordinarily determined. Simply from the point of view of returns on effort and investment, "Honesty is the best policy." Much business which is ranked as legitimate pays far better than did my illegitimate undertakings. For me, the loot which was secured constituted a small factor in the question. What I wanted was to take something away from society in retaliation for what I felt it had taken away from me.

In order to illustrate my point, I want to relate an incident or two which occurred in the course of my career, showing the great dangers involved and the strong driving motives which a man must have in order to persist in burglary.

The first experience was shortly before Christmas in 1907. A sheet of frozen snow

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covered the ground. Walking along a lonely country road, looking for a place on which to go to work, I saw by the bright moonlight a house which stood on the slope of a hill. I walked up to it. Forcing my way in through the pantry window, I passed into the dining room. There I set leisurely to work selecting and packing up the family silver, feeling quite secure because my entry had been entirely silent. In order to avoid any possible noise, I had taken off my shoes and deposited them in the pantry. The door of the pantry was one of those swinging doors operated by a spring. In order to keep it open for a quick exit if necessary, I had placed a heavy log from a fireplace against the door. Somehow or other that log started to slip and roll. The noise of the rolling log must have awakened the inhabitants of the house, for suddenly I heard a shot fired, as I crouched waiting to see if any one would stir, and felt a bullet knock off my hat. Diving through the door, I gained the outside, where, to my surprise, several other shots were fired after me. "A

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pretty nervy guy!" I thought, taking to my heels over the frozen snow, in my stocking feet and bareheaded.

I continued running until I was out of pistol shot. Then, looking back, I saw by the light of the moon a trail of blood which puzzled me. Was it possible that one of the bullets had taken effect and I had not felt it? Then I saw that the blood came from several deep cuts in my numb feet, caused by the sharp crust of the frozen snow.

I was in a bad situation, without shoes and with my feet bleeding freely. What was I to do? I had to get a pair of shoes and a hat; that much was certain. I could not go back to New York on the train in this condition. So I mustered my resolution and staggered along until I came to the next house. This I entered; and in it I fortunately obtained a pair of shoes and a hat which fitted, and an overcoat besides. With this outfit I arrived home safely and spent some time in nursing my injured feet before I got out again.

Such are the physical dangers which come to

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a man who takes up the "gentle" art of burglary. The risks which he runs of getting caught and sent to prison, if less terrifying than those of being shot, are even greater. This was illustrated by a second experience which I recall.

The scene of the crime was laid at Hastings-on-the-Hudson. Close to the river stands the substantially built summer home of a well-known New York silk manufacturer. Close to the entrance of the grounds stands the gatekeeper's and caretaker's lodge, which is connected with a most remarkable burglar alarm system. The real effectiveness of this system, however, had never been proved until we tried it out.

It was before midnight when we made the attempt, by a rear window in the basement. After we had forced the lock and pushed the window up, there was no sign of any alarm. We entered and found the house completely deserted. With the exception of the furniture, it had been entirely cleaned out. We were just on the point of leaving when I

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chanced to look out of the parlor window and saw some one with a lantern moving about the grounds not far from the house. We watched, and presently another light became visible. The situation became interesting and somewhat perplexing to us. Then we hit on the alarm idea.

A glance at one of the windows proved the correctness of our guess. There was an electrical connection; and our raising of the cellar window had unquestionably given a signal to the caretaker. We had put ourselves in a very tight place.

How to get out of the trap with a whole skin was a problem still to be solved. To get out as quickly as possible was the only thing to do; but would it be advisable to leave by the front door or should we get out by the rear basement window where we got in? We decided to pursue the latter course. We groped our way in the dark back to the window, and after a few minutes' hesitation slipped out. No sooner had we landed outside, however, than we heard a shot. We started to run. A

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volley of pistol shots came from all directions. Luckily, all of the bullets whistled over our heads.

We made for the river bank. Half running and half sliding, we landed at the bottom. We stopped long enough to get our bearings. Besides a few minor scratches, neither of us was injured. We ran on down the shore, and then made our way across country for some two miles. Then we sat down to rest and to recover from our fright and consult what to do next. At first, I personally was willing to crawl into the nearest barn and go to sleep. My partner, however, urged against it.

"You might get hay fever," he jeered, "from sleeping in the hay." He wanted to make another try.

It was still early, about two o'clock in the morning. There was ample time to try another "job." It was true that both of us were pretty well exhausted and quite a bit unnerved by the reception we had had at Hastings. However, the idea of roaming about the country all night without getting any "game"

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began to irritate me, too. We were in the vicinity of Tarrytown, and near by were several pretty country estates. The thought of going back empty handed made us desperate. We decided that we could not afford to let ourselves fail, so we mustered our determination and again set out.

On the top of a knoll, in a rather lonesome location, we saw the outline of a residence. As we drew near, we saw that it was newly constructed and that the ground around it was still broken and uncultivated. The owner had evidently just moved in, and in a hurry. Here was a chance to get some new silverware unspoiled by much use.

We tackled the place without much hesitation. The kitchen was in the basement at the back of the house. Iron bars protected the windows. First we put our arms through the bars and tried the window. It was unlocked. Then we tried the bars and found that they would give under small pressure. A little more exertion of strength on our part bent the bars far enough to permit my partner to wiggle

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through. He opened the kitchen door and let me in.

After our run and hard work, we were hungry. So before going upstairs we looked in the ice box, thinking that a little lunch and possibly a sip from a bottle we saw there would give us more energy and courage for the rest of the performance. Each of us seized a leg of a roast chicken; and had the owner of the house come downstairs unexpectedly, he would have seen two famished individuals standing at the kitchen table rapaciously devouring his chicken and finishing up his Rhine wine.

We had only an hour left before daylight, so we hurried our meal and softly ascended to the dining room. There, on the sideboard, was the usual display of shining silverware. We packed some together and carried it downstairs into the kitchen, and then went back up for more. We finally left with a considerable haul for our night's work, after a disconcerting start.

I want to say that up to this time neither of us carried a pistol or other arms of any kind.

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But after the Hastings shooting match, as stories already told have indicated, we decided that if there should be any more such sniping going on we would be ready to join in the game. Accordingly, both of us purchased six-shooters and enough ammunition to supply a whole regiment of soldiers. It was the same impulse to retaliate which dominated, for the time, my whole attitude toward society.

The fact which stands out in my mind now, as I look back, is that after the experience through which I had gone I had practically no care for any ethical or moral principle. Society had struck me; I struck back. Society fought me whenever it got a chance; I was prepared to fight back. Society had failed absolutely, in the periods in which it had me in its hands and under its control, to teach me anything except to become its more bitter foe. In those days, I could not see or comprehend anything but the jungle law of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."

CHAPTER XIII

A ROMANCE

UNLESS a man has led the life which I had led, he cannot get an adequate idea of its great mental strain and the drain upon physical endurance. The constant fear of the long arm of the law, which might at any moment reach out and seize me by the neck, the frequent danger of being killed, the exposure on cold nights in the country, all had their effects upon me. My health began to break. I was disgusted with the whole business and wanted a rest. But I also needed money.

It was late in the summer of 1908 that my old pal came to me and suggested "a trip to the country." He had been studying the home of some millionaire, which he said it would be an easy job to tackle—no dogs, no private watchman, and not even a burglar alarm, he believed. I hesitated; but the thought that a

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good haul might give me a chance to "lay off" decided me. I agreed to go along. Without giving details, it is sufficient to say that the job was successful and profitable. At last I could take a good rest and forget about my worries.

Taking my few belongings, I left New York, with its noise and its crowded tenements full of misery, and departed for a small country town some seventy miles from the city. The boarding house where I put up suited me very well. The lady keeping the establishment was a good motherly soul who took a deep interest in the physical needs and welfare of her boarders.

The first few days in the country soothed my tired nerves and I began to take more interest in my pleasant surroundings. What pleased me most of all, however, was not the wholesome food and sweet juicy fruit on the table, nor the kind attention of the housekeeper, nor the lake near by with its clear green water, but something very different, an interest new to me—a girl. Strange as it may seem, it is never-

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theless true that up to that time no woman had ever aroused my interest. The years spent in prison had practically killed every spark of emotion in my heart. Indeed, it was almost impossible for me to look a woman straight in the eye. My past life of crime made me ashamed in meeting a woman of high character; and the other kind never had an attraction for me.

I struck up an acquaintance with the girl. In fact, I was forced by circumstances to do so whether I had wished to or not. She sat at the same table with me; and the motherly old boarding-house keeper introduced us to each other. The first week I fought shy of her and made all sorts of excuses for keeping out of her way. However, her kind blue eyes and her golden-brown hair and soft voice haunted my thoughts.

So, one evening after supper, I plucked up courage and asked her, in a rather awkward way, to take a stroll with me. At first she declined; but later she changed her mind and accompanied me down to the lake. Then

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followed a series of happy days, the happiest which up till then had come into my otherwise harsh life. We would walk down to the lake and go for boat rides, or sit under a shade tree on hot afternoons and read a book of stories. Finally, one or two quiet moonlit evenings, we strolled along the country lanes hand in hand like a couple of children.

Too soon the day arrived when she had to depart. A letter came, telling that one of her sisters had been taken seriously ill. There was little time for her to say good-by. With a significant smile and pressure of the hand and a promise to write, she vanished out of my life. The stern facts of the situation shattered the happy dream. I could not get the thought of her out of my mind; and yet I did not dare to tell her about my life and what sort of man I was. If things were only different, I thought, I would have been able to ask her to marry me. As they were, with the life I had led, I felt it out of the question. What would she think of me if I told her the truth?

From what she had told me of her home life,

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I concluded that she was an obedient daughter and a loving sister. Her parents were hard-working people; and she was their oldest child. She was evidently a mainstay of the family life in their home. These facts made a tremendous appeal to me. It was not so much her appearance which attracted me, as her sensible character and her lovable disposition. But I could not feel certain of what would be the result of telling her about myself.

A few days after she had gone, I found myself back in the city. The country retreat had lost its charm and become a lonely place. I went back to my old haunts, but not the same man I was when I had left some three weeks before. On the day after my arrival in New York, a letter came from the girl, telling me that her sister had died. During the next few days I did some hard thinking. I began to realize a new object in life. One more big haul, I thought, would square my account with society. It would also make it possible for me to start married life. After that I would go straight and quit the game forever. Bitter

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experience had taught me that there was nothing in it but hardship and privation and danger, with imprisonment at the end. I was a sucker! I ran the risks while the "fences," the receivers of stolen goods, took the biggest part of the profits, as cowards usually do. I drew for myself a mental picture of a happy home, and thought how I would somehow induce the girl to marry me and then would work hard to support her and be a useful citizen.

Our correspondence became quite voluminous at this time. I told her of my plans for the home I would like to make for her. I never revealed to her what was my mode of life at the time.

Whether or not my old pal had noticed the change which had taken place in me, I could not tell. He seemed to consider me with a sort of suspicion which was ominous; and whenever I did or said some foolish thing, he would only smile at me, sourly and satirically. Like myself, he was in financial difficulties. We right away set about making plans for another midnight expedition into the country.

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We were both ready now to take big chances.

Some distance out in the country, far from other habitations, stood one of the summer homes of a Standard Oil magnate. For some time we had had our eyes on the place, wanting to tackle it. So we went out early one evening to learn whether any of the family were at home and to see whether the place was being protected by private watchmen. When we arrived, we found the mansion shrouded in complete darkness. We waited and waited; but no sign of life was visible anywhere. The whole place seemed to be temporarily deserted.

After midnight, we left our hiding place and carefully prowled around the house. We expected to find watchmen on guard. No one showed up, however. All the windows on the ground floor had been tightly shut, and no loophole was left to us to get in without using force. My partner pulled out his jimmy, and with a loud crash broke one of the locks. Carefully we lifted the window high enough to permit our heads and shoulders to pass through, and the rest of our bodies followed. Once inside,

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we opened the front entrance to serve as an emergency exit.

In the beautiful dining room we found by the rays of our flashlights that the sideboard was bare, the drawers empty, and we had been "stung" again. We should have known that it was impossible to outwit the "oil king." For two hours we roamed all through the many rooms; and all we could get out of that whole big house was a pair of striped trousers and a frock coat, both of which fitted me fairly well. All I lacked was a silk hat and a white waistcoat to be taken for a Sunday School superintendent or a deacon in some church. We left the capitalist's mansion probably the most disappointed guests who had ever called without invitation. I was as far away from the possibility of marriage as ever, except for the possession of a wedding costume.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MARK TWAIN BURGLARY

THE idea of settling down and having a home of my own had never appealed to me very strongly until now. A real new interest in life and its future, however, made a great difference. I felt that the time had come to go straight; but to make a home for the girl I wanted to marry called for money, and lots of it. One more big haul, I still thought, was needed to make things even so far as myself and society were concerned, and also to give me my start. Thrusting aside all other thoughts, I started to work out various plans for the next and last "job."

A day or two after our unsuccessful invasion of the oil magnate's house, I picked up a Sunday newspaper and read an account and saw some pictures of the fine villa which the late Mark Twain had built somewhere in the country. He was going to move "all his

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earthly possessions" up there and "make it his permanent residence." The great author and humorist called his place "Innocents at Home," which he later changed to "Stormfield." Naturally, my interest and curiosity were aroused, not so much by the description of the beautiful home as by that of the portable "earthly possessions." They appealed to me very strongly.

It was September 16, 1908, when I called on my partner and put the Mark Twain house proposition up to him. Like myself, he was "broke." We were in the same boat. The Mark Twain house possibilities lured him as powerfully as they did me. The following afternoon we boarded a train out of New York for Redding, Connecticut, where "Stormfield" stood.

It was quite dark when we arrived at the Redding Station. There was not a sound to be heard or a person to be seen on the roads. Only the sharp bark of a dog broke the stillness of the night as we passed by a farmhouse. Since we had never been in that part of the country before, we were not quite sure of our

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way. So, in order to make certain, I went back to the farmhouse and inquired about the road to Redding. This was the first mistake which I made that night. The farmer, seeing that we were strangers, came out and directed us on our way, lantern in hand.

After he left us, we kept on walking along the dusty country road until we came to a sharp turn, when the bright lights of a large house situated on the top of a hill arrested our attention. We concluded that this must be the Mark Twain residence, and accordingly walked in its direction. Arriving at "Stormfield," we found the house lights still burning brightly. The family had not yet retired. In order to give the occupants time to go to sleep, we picked out a secluded place behind some bushes and indulged in a quiet smoke during a period of watching and waiting.

It was getting well on toward midnight when one by one the lights were extinguished and the house was enshrouded in complete darkness except for one dim light upstairs. Experience told us that this was nothing unusual.

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My partner went on a tour of inspection around the house. He returned presently with the word that the coast was clear and that one of the kitchen windows had been left partly open. I helped my partner to climb in through it; and he then went and opened the big French double doors leading out from the dining room on the great veranda. I entered by the front door, like a gentleman.

By the rays of our flashlights, we first made a careful inspection of the dining room. The heavy, old-fashioned, oak sideboard near the door leading into the hall commanded our attention. We knew that it contained the family silver, which it was our object to secure first, as usual. We tried to open the drawers of the sideboard, but found them locked. To break them open would make a noise, of course, and disturb the family if done inside the house. We did not wish to be guilty of such carelessness, so we took hold of the sideboard and carried it out of the house and some five hundred feet down the road. There we broke the locks of the drawers and emptied their con-

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tents into a black bag which we had brought for the purpose. Then we went back into the house to see what else we could find.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to mention a brass bowl which had stood as an ornament on top of the sideboard, and which played such an important and fatal part on that night. Since a brass bowl was of no value to us I took it and placed it noiselessly on the dining-room floor—without my partner's knowledge, however. This was my second mistake on that night. When we entered the dining room the second time, my partner, walking rather carelessly, stumbled and fell heavily over that brass bowl.

In the stillness of the night it seemed to me as if an earthquake had suddenly struck the house. Such a noise that rolling brass thing made! With every nerve tense, we silently watched and waited for the result.

Presently a woman, dressed in bathrobe and slippers, appeared at the head of the stairs. Then a soft clear voice called: "Hello!" It was Miss Lyons, Mark Twain's social secre-

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tary, as we afterwards learned, who, awakened by the noise, had courageously come to investigate. A moment we hesitated. Then we turned and silently and swiftly left the house.

Running down the road, we picked up our bag with the silver, and continued running till we arrived at the foot of the hill. There we slackened speed and started to walk back in the direction of Bethel, some seven miles from "Stormfield."

Naturally, the discovery of our presence created a sensation in the Mark Twain household. It is said that the butler, who had been aroused, fired several shots after us, "to hasten our departure," as Mr. Albert Bigelow Paine puts it in his biography of Mark Twain. For this, however, I cannot vouch, as we must have been considerably out of pistol shot by the time the gun went off. The shots, however, did awaken the aged author of "Huckleberry Finn" who, says Mr. Paine in his account, imagining that a champagne party was in progress below, rolled over and went to sleep again.

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By the time we reached Bethel, the deputy sheriff had been notified and a posse of farmers, hastily organized, had started in pursuit of us. Had we continued our walk some two miles farther to Danbury, however, the probability is that we might never have been caught and that this story would never have been told. We decided to take a chance and to wait at Bethel for the early train to New York. This proved to be the third and the biggest mistake of that night.

We boarded the train at seven o'clock without interference. After we were comfortably seated in the smoker, a man came up to us and inquired where we had got on the train. We told him Danbury. The interrogator happened to be a neighbor of Mark Twain, who suspected us as the culprits. He notified the sheriff in charge of the posse waiting for this train when it pulled into the Redding station. A dozen men, armed with pitchforks, shotguns, clubs, and other weapons, boarded the train just as it was pulling away from the platform. After a survey of the other coaches,

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they entered the smoker by the rear door. My partner, seeing the armed men entering and that we were greatly outnumbered, jumped up from his seat and ran quickly to the front platform, where he succeeded in dropping off from the rapidly moving train. One of the posse fired several shots after him, but without hitting him.

My partner having successfully "flown the coop," the entire posse turned upon me. An automatic pistol was shoved in front of my face and I was commanded to surrender. Instead of obeying the command, I pulled out my own revolver and began to blaze away at the ceiling of the car to cause a panic if possible. I did not want to kill any one; and they did not want to shoot me. The sheriff, from behind me, seized me by the right wrist and tried to twist my gun out of my hand. The others now attacked me, and a free-for-all fight ensued. Showers of blows fell upon me from all sides. Then I was struck several times on the head with a blackjack and, partly conscious, sank to the floor still grappling with

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the sheriff. In the furious struggle for possession of the revolver, which I still gripped securely, it went off. I became unconscious.

When I came to myself, I was lying handcuffed out on the tracks, with my captors standing over me. I felt a heavy stream of blood pouring down over my face from wounds in my head. A sickening sense of despair came over me. I was in for it again; and all my dreams of marriage and of happiness in a home of my own were blown to shreds.

When my gun was accidentally discharged in the fight with the sheriff, the bullet had entered the flesh just back of the sheriff's thigh. He was enraged; and now, after I had regained consciousness and attempted to rise, he seized me by the throat and struck me a severe blow savagely in the face. I staggered under the unexpected attack. Then several other members of the crowd jumped at me, raining further blows on my head and body as I stood defenseless. Then I was dragged back to the station, some distance away, where I found

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that my partner was also being held as a prisoner.

We were handcuffed together and marched to the farm near the station, where the night before I had made inquiries concerning the way to Redding Center. The old farmer came out of the house and, recognizing us as we drew near, greeted us with a sneer and snicker, saying: "Wall, boys, glad t'see yer ag'in!"

As I was weakened by the loss of much blood, they summoned a physician to dress my wounds and to bandage the sheriff's leg. We were then placed in a carriage and taken to the town hall in Redding Center for a preliminary hearing. After we had been seated in the dingy room which served as the court room, a carriage in which were Mark Twain, his daughter, Miss Clara Clemens, and Miss Lyons, his secretary, drew up before the building. The party entered; and passing close by, the humorist, dressed in his famous white clothes, turned upon me and delivered a scathing verbal castigation and lecture on morality, ending by denouncing me as "a dis-

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grace to the human race." Apparently satisfied with the mental punishment which he had inflicted upon me, he took a seat alongside of the justice of the peace.

After being placed under heavy bail, we were remanded to the Fairfield County jail at Bridgeport for safe-keeping.

When Mark Twain returned to "Stormfield," he caused the following notice to be placed over his dining-room door:

NOTICE!

To the Next Burglar

There is only plated ware in this house now and henceforth.

You will find it in that brass thing in the dining room over in the corner by the basket of kittens.

If you want the basket, put the kittens in the brass thing.

Do not make a noise—it disturbs the family.

You will find rubbers in the front hall by that thing which has the umbrellas in it,—chiffonier, I think they call it, or pergola, or something like that.

Please close the door when you go away!

VERY TRULY YOURS,

S. L. CLEMENS.

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The three months during which we lay in the county jail awaiting trial seemed a very long time. We were locked in separate corridors and not allowed to talk or even to see each other. Neither were any outside visitors, with the exception of our lawyer, permitted to see us. Twice each week our cells were carefully searched for contraband articles, and while the rest of the prisoners were allowed free exercise in the corridor we had to stay in our cells. Not even the weekly bath was I permitted to take with the rest of the prisoners. I was taken into the bathroom separately and always under a guard of two armed keepers. Since I did not make any attempt to escape, this treatment received at the hands of the county sheriff struck me then as very unjust. However, there was no one to listen to complaint; and I can see now that they regarded me as dangerous.

At last the day arrived for our trial. Securely chained to a number of other offenders, we were taken to Danbury. It was the first time in fifty years that the Supreme Court had

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sat in that particular Connecticut town. After spending a restless night in the ancient and dingy Danbury jail, we were led, heavily guarded by a large force of deputy sheriffs, across the street and up into the court room. The small room was crowded with spectators and with witnesses for the state. The most noticeable and distinguished person in the room, naturally, was neither the judge nor the sheriff, but the humorist, Mark Twain, wearing a dark suit instead of his customary light-colored clothes for this serious occasion.

After the usual formalities in starting the trial, the witnesses for the state were called to testify against us. The most serious charge against me was not that of burglary, but a far more important, and an unjust charge, conviction for which would have meant a sentence of thirty years in state prison—the charge of assault with intent to murder. I am inclined to think that my story and the realization of the hard years of suffering which I had undergone impressed Mark Twain and that he was responsible or influential in having the charge

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changed to a less serious one, thus probably saving me from twenty years of imprisonment which I should still be undergoing. As it was, upon conviction under the charge finally brought against me, I was sentenced to serve a term of ten years in the Connecticut State Prison at Wethersfield.

Perhaps it may not be amiss to mention that our visit to his house furnished a new subject to Mark Twain, to which he not infrequently referred in later lectures. Thus, while dedicating the little new library which he had founded for the residents of the town of Redding, Mark Twain took occasion to make characteristic fun of the affair as follows:

“I am going to help build this library with contributions—from my visitors. Every male guest who comes to my house will have to contribute a dollar or go away without his baggage. If those burglars who broke into my house recently had done that, they would have been happier now; or if they had broken into

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this library, they might have read a few good books and led a better life. Now they are in jail, and if they keep on they will go to Congress. When a person starts down hill, you can never tell where he is going to stop. I am sorry for those burglars. They got nothing that they wanted, and scared away most of my servants. Now we are putting in a burglar alarm instead of a dog. Some advised the dog, but it costs even more to entertain a dog than a burglar. I am having the ground electrified, so that for a mile around any one who puts foot across the line will set off an alarm that will be heard in Europe."

III
UP GRADE



CHAPTER XV.

IN AGAIN

AT Wethersfield, Connecticut, close by the river and not far from the city of Hartford, stands a fine old money-making plant called the Connecticut State Prison.

It was a bleak November day in the year 1908 when the iron-barred gates of the prison at Wethersfield closed with a click and shut me inside. For the first time in all my years of wrongdoing, the defiant spirit seemed to leave me, and a feeling of unutterable hopelessness and despair took possession of me. Completely crushed in the iron clutch of circumstance, I gave up all hope of ever looking into the eyes of the girl again. My life, so far as all prospects of anything which seemed worth while and gave it meaning were concerned, seemed at an end. I could not think of sending her word of what had happened and why I was where I was; she must remain in ignorance,

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that much was clear, to explain my disappearance and to reconcile herself to it in whatever way she might. The name I had given at my trial would not connect me with the affair in her mind, if she should see the reports of it; and besides, not much news about it was likely to appear back in the country town in which she lived.

There was nothing that I could do except to try to forget her, to blot the thought of her out of my mind and the memory of her out of my consciousness as far as possible.

The first weeks at Wethersfield were the hardest and most trying weeks I have ever had to spend in prison. Strongly as I might try to fight back the thought of the outside world, yet my mind would wander back to the happy golden summer days which I had spent in the country with the girl. The inexorable hand of fate was upon me; and I had to submit to its urging. Remorse gnawed at my mind day and night, leaving me no rest; and now and then on sleepless nights, black despair came

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creeping over me and bringing me to the verge of self-destruction.

Finally, there were my prison keepers, who came and drove me to work for a contractor whose only god was the almighty dollar and whose only aim was to make as much money out of my enforced labor as he could. To my mind, there is no more heartless, brutal, greedy, and inhuman system in existence than that of private contract labor in prison. It strikes at every vestige of self-respect and manhood which the prisoner may still possess; and it hardens his heart and conscience in bitterness and makes him an outlaw against society.

It required some weeks for me to get back into prison routine, to accustom myself once more to the dirty prison clothing, to the repulsive unsatisfying food, to the hateful and barbarous prison discipline, to my narrow whitewashed cell, and to the damp stale air which seemed to pervade the institution. The cell in which I was locked on my arrival was located on the top or fifth gallery, immediately

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under the roof, where no ray of sunlight ever penetrated. The place was cold in winter and hot in summer, with hardly any ventilation at all. All told, there were about four hundred cells in the old brick cell block at Wethersfield, gallery upon gallery. The whole block was surrounded by an outer shell, also of brick, with heavily barred slots which also served as windows. A slate-covered roof was supposed to keep out the rain: but it did not, for on a rainy day the cement floor of the old cell block was usually flooded by the water leaking through. In the winter, with melting snow on the roof, the corridor hardly ever got a chance to dry. Consequently, the whole block was damp; malaria and influenza and consumption were quite common when I first came to the prison at Wethersfield. Any one looking at the institution with his eyes wide open could easily see that it was mismanaged, that some of the buildings were in a state of disrepair, and that the health of the five hundred inmates was in a deplorable condition. Nobody, from the governor down, seemed to have time to

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take an active interest in how things were run at the Connecticut State Prison.

Once a month, the various members of the Board of Prison Directors met in a room outside of the prison proper, and listened to the report which was read to them by the warden, examined the few prisoners eligible for parole, and drove away again. Nominally, the prison directors were appointed by the governor every two years, but unless they resigned of their own free will they were usually in "for life." It should be understood that their own private affairs left them very little time to give much attention to prison matters. They depended almost entirely upon the agent or warden of the prison, who had a free hand in the management of the place. Therefore, the warden was practically responsible to no one except himself, for the control by the prison directors is ineffective, honest and sincere though they may be.

Once every two years, during the session of the state legislature, a committee appointed by that body of lawmakers visited the prison and

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made out a report of the state of affairs as they found them. Needless to say, the prison authorities were duly notified of such visits in advance, and did everything to have the institution in perfect order for inspection. Then the régime went on as before.

Now that women have the right to vote, it is to be hoped that their social sympathies will lead them to investigate conditions in such places and to turn the prisons into cleaner and saner places for the reform of human beings. I could never understand why women should not be appointed to sit with men on the Board of Prison Directors. I believe it would accomplish a great deal of good. The women should look into it.

As an indication of the state of mind to which I was driven in the earlier period of my confinement at the Wethersfield prison, I want to relate the story of a mad enterprise in which I spent my time secretly in my cell. One Sunday afternoon, during the first month of my term, while I was resting on the hard, narrow cot and gazing up at the slab of stone which

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served as the ceiling of the cell, an idea of escape flashed into my mind. I jumped up and started to pace the floor of that eight by six enclosure until my brain was dizzy. My plan was formulated. The only thing between me and escape, I believed, was that slab of stone. Once clear of the cell, I believed I would be able to find a way out and escape over the prison wall. Ten years seemed to me like a lifetime. I was determined not to serve that long. I had read of men digging their way through prison walls with only a tool made of a soup spoon. The next day I succeeded in smuggling an old shoeknife out of the workshop, and that night I set to work to loosen the mortar up in the back corner at the ceiling. The hole thus made I filled with some water-soaked paper. Each night I made very little progress; but I had to work noiselessly in the dark and also to keep an eye out for the night watchman who passed my cell on his rounds every half hour. He wore a pair of rubber-soled "sneakers" and could not be heard walking along the gallery. Discovery meant punishment and the

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dungeon, besides the loss of hope of escape.

At the end of a week I had succeeded in loosening the first brick upon which the ceiling slab of the cell rested. Another week, and I had the second brick out, permitting me to thrust my hand into the space between the stone slab of my cell ceiling and that of the cell immediately back of it. I found that the space thus left was about a foot wide; that is, the slabs rested upon the cell walls about twelve inches apart. To me, this was a most important discovery, and held out many possibilities. One of them was that, if I could manage to remove only a small portion of the corner of that stone slab, large enough to permit me to squeeze through, nothing could prevent my escape, as I believed, through the roof of the cell block.

I replaced the bricks and carefully stuffed the cracks and plastered them over with cement dust and whitewash so that nothing could be noticed. My next step was in an entirely different direction. In the prison kitchen considerable quantities of saltpeter were used, for

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reasons well known to custodians of such institutions, in the preparation of our food. To one of the waiters, whose acquaintance I had made, I slipped a note telling him to furnish me with as much saltpeter as he could get. So, for the next few weeks, I often found under my upturned cup in the dining room a small piece of the requested substance, which I slipped into my pocket. In the meantime, I kept my eye open for some sulphur, of which I finally secured a lump with the assistance of a fellow inmate, a "lifer," who worked in the boiler room.

The next thing I had to get was charcoal of some kind. An old willow basket which I got my hands on in the shop supplied the right sort of material. Breaking bits from the basket, I gradually succeeded in smuggling to my cell enough to burn down into a fair supply of charcoal. All inmates were furnished with a weekly supply of matches; and many of them were in the habit of "smoking out" some of the unwelcome bedfellows which otherwise would accumulate in large numbers and dis-

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turb slumber. Therefore, I calculated that smoke coming out from between the bars of my cell would cause no more attention than usual in such cases.

It required about two months to gather the proper materials in sufficient quantity. The next step was to get the encyclopedia from the prison library and look up the information about the mixing of ingredients for manufacturing powder. Having duly pulverized my raw materials, saltpeter, sulphur and charcoal, I started to prepare the mixture according to the directions given in the encyclopedia. This took me considerably more time. By the time I got through with my process, I had enough powder hidden in my cell, I believed, to blow off the corner of the stone slab ceiling over my cell.

Winter had passed and spring had come when I made ready for the final step in my attempt to escape. Removing the loose bricks in the back top corner of my cell, I filled the space behind with the powder, tamped it down, stuck in a fuse that I had made, and replaced

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the bricks, leaving a small point of fuse sticking out to be fired. This done, I bided my time. On Sundays, the prisoners were obliged to eat their supper, consisting of bread and tea, in their cells instead of in the dining room as they would do on week days. Accordingly, about five o'clock every Sunday afternoon, the officer on duty would pass down the line with a bread basket on his arm and hand each prisoner a slice of bread through the bars. A "trusty" with a can of tea would follow, filling the tin cups of the men behind the bars as he went along. As a rule, this process would start from the top gallery where my cell was located. This I considered was the best time for my operation, for the guards would be busy and would be paying the least attention.

One Sunday afternoon, after the officer had distributed the bread in my gallery and passed out of the section, I placed my mattress tight up against the door, scratched a match, and set it to the fuse. Slowly it sputtered and ate its way in between the brick wall and the ceiling of my cell. Then came the thud of the explosion.

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Powder smoke filled my whole cell, almost suffocating me. Hastily I tore the mattress away from the door to let out some of the smoke. The strong smell of it drifted through the corridor, causing all kinds of half-suppressed commentaries from the men in the cells near by. No guard being near, it was not then noticed; and by great good fortune, the thud of the explosion had not attracted attention.

After the smoke had gradually drifted out of my cell, I examined the result of my long and patient labor. The force of the explosion, instead of blowing off the corner of the stone slab, as I had hoped, had taken a downward course and merely blown out several bricks in the cell wall! In disgust, I hastily filled up the hole again and concealed every evidence of my attempt to escape. Of course, the smell of the powder smoke around the cell block finally attracted attention. The officials quietly began an investigation; but it was not until a week later that suspicion was cast upon me. Some one had "squealed." Even then, it was evident that the intent and location of the ex-

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plosion had not been made clear. My cell was searched; but I had had time to conceal the evidences of my enterprise well enough so that no open accusation was made against me.

However, the suspicion of the prison officials had been aroused. I was transferred to Cell No. 1, on the ground floor, where I was under constant surveillance for most of the time until my release some eight years later, when "good time" earned by good conduct brought my term to an end in advance of my full ten-year sentence.

CHAPTER XVI

TWENTIETH CENTURY SLAVERY

WITHIN the past few years much has been written and a good deal left unwritten about the contract labor system in prisons. In a previous chapter I made a few remarks about that system as I found it in the Wisconsin State Prison at Waupun. It is true that most of the progressive and enlightened States have abolished this modern form of slavery as a brutal and unjust exploitation of the unfortunates in prison by a clique of private individuals, as a system which does not reform men but actually deforms them.

In Connecticut, known as the "Commonwealth of steady habits," the contract system still flourishes. If the good people of Connecticut looked into the matter, they would find that the taxes of the citizens at large are supporting

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a contract labor plant within the walls of the State prison which is turning out good profits for private individuals. The same thing is true in other states where private contract labor in prison exists.

Before I begin to give the picture of conditions as I found them upon arrival at Wethersfield, I want to make it clear that I do not hold that convicts should not have to work in prison. I simply contend that they should be taught useful trades, that a just amount of wages should be secured to them or their families, and that any benefits from prison labor should go to the state as representing the people and not to a set of grasping contractors.

When I arrived at Wethersfield in the autumn of the year 1908, a shoe company of Boston, Massachusetts, held the contract for the main shop and employed some three hundred convicts in the manufacture of cheap shoes. A shirt-making concern with offices in Chicago, Illinois, had a shop over the prison chapel and employed about one hundred men to turn out cheap shirts to be sold on the open

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market, as were also the cheap shoes. These two private concerns practically owned the prison, bars and all. The state furnished the shop space, free of charge, the storage space, free of charge, heat and light and power, free of charge—in fact, everything except machinery and raw material. The state also furnished labor, in return for a nominal payment. There were no labor troubles or strikes to interfere with the production of shoes and shirts in the prison. The prisoners had no union or “right of collective bargaining” or representation. The State took care of that, through its guards, furnished also free of charge.

Each prisoner had to perform a certain “task” each day. Failure to perform the task might be punished by confinement in the “dark cell” on bread and water for three days or such longer periods as the prison authorities might deem fit. Bad work or willful destruction of “private property” would also be severely punished by confinement in the “dark cell,” deprivation of privileges such as correspondence, and loss of “good time.” Prison guards,

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whose duty it was to enforce the rules and maintain discipline, were stationed in the various shops. They saw to it that the requirements of the hireling slave drivers, whom the contractors had as representatives in each shop, were fulfilled. The qualification of these men was the knowledge of how to drive helpless prisoners, and for it they were paid. They used to get an output of from two thousand to twenty-five hundred pairs of shoes a day from the prison plant for the shoe company. The small "rental" paid to the prison authorities to hire the prison labor would much more than cover the average estimated cost to the state of the cheap daily maintenance of each convict. Over and above that, the prices at which the shoes could be sold in the open market would net a tremendous profit percentage to the exploiters.

The work of the prison contractors is done in a very systematic way. From seven in the morning until noon time and from one o'clock until six in the afternoon, work goes on without interruption. When a convict enters the

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prison, he is put to work on a machine whether he likes it or not; and he stays at that machine during the working hours of the day until he is discharged or dies. The monotony of doing one operation over and over again, day in and day out, for months and years, is sufficiently terrible even in free employment outside a prison. Add to this the constant driving and grinding under the contract system enforced by armed overseers, confinement in a close cell at night, lack of proper exercise in the fresh air, the poor quality of the food, and the feeling in a man that he is compelled to contribute his labor in order to fill the pockets of some private individual; and you have some conception of what this system of twentieth century slavery means, as it is still practiced in some of our modern prisons.

On entering the Connecticut State Prison at Wethersfield I was put to work operating a sewing machine in the stitching room. There was I, a strong man in the full power of youth, forced to do a woman's work, with the sense that the fact that I was doing it was taking that

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work out of the hands of some woman outside the walls of the prison and perhaps robbing her and her family of a living. I confess that my own previous career had not indicated a development of any very complete sense of social responsibility; but the principle involved in this situation I could at least see and feel. It made me writhe inside to realize that this form of expropriation was tolerated by the laws and by the indifference of the community. Furthermore, the feeling that my labor had been sold to a greedy contractor who did not care a rap about me or the woman whom my labor probably deprived of employment, the feeling that I was compelled to strain my eyes and nerves in physical toil until my bones ached and my mind became a blank—for such a man, the feeling of being regarded as a mere thing to be rented and used at the will of a slave driver, the feeling of being shut away from what little was dear and near to me, and the heartless killing of the best that was in me, drove me into black rage. Let society consider and decide whether it is beneficial and to its interest

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to maintain a system which makes men the prey of such passions.

In order to bring out clearly the wider ranges of the problem and the reaction of this form of enforced labor upon others, let me quote a few extracts from an article by Samuel Gompers, the President of the American Federation of Labor which appeared in *Harper's Weekly* for April 9, 1914:

"With the low prices for convict labor, manufacturers who employ free labor are hopelessly unable to compete. Free workers are thrown out of employment. They and their families suffer hunger and all manner of privation because of the contract labor system. Free competition of convict-made goods with the product of free labor does not increase the number of commodities furnished to the community, because protected and favored by special conditions and privileges it has forced fair firms out of fields of production.

"We workers have been very close to the problem of earning our daily bread in the sweat of our brows, and we have found the contract labor system a menace to free labor and to the convicts. Accordingly, we have used every power at our disposal to have this system abolished.

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"We have advocated that prisons and reformatories should be real reformatory institutions—institutions to foster the sacred human individuality, to develop the best instincts that are in those shut off from the ordinary intercourse with fellow men, and to give them some kind of wholesome employment that would enable them to work into some better self. We have maintained that those in prison should work and should be paid for that work, that they should be given every freedom compatible with the purpose for which they are made to live apart, and meanwhile should be safeguarded from exploitation.

"It is most obviously untrue to state that organized labor desires that 'many thousands of able-bodied men ought to be supported in prison in idleness, instead of laboring to increase the number of commodities furnished to the community.' We wish the men under prison sentence to be employed in such a way that they shall be benefited and not harmed, and so that the products of their labor cannot constitute a menace to free labor.

"We working men have constantly preached the gospel of labor. We believe in labor. But we believe in labor that uplifts and ennoble the worker, labor in which he can participate, conscious that thereby he is developing the best that is in him and eliminating the lower impulses. The right kind of work can bring men back into the right relation of life, but prison

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slavery only buttresses the barriers that separate the individual from society and intensifies the antagonism to social organization. The prison contract labor system is neither economically wise nor humanitarian."

As far as it affects free outside labor, there is, indeed, a strong condemnation of the prison contract system; and coming from such an authority as Mr. Gompers it is doubly strong.

What about the prisoner, the human being forced to slave under such a system? What effect has it upon him?

Fifteen years spent in such enforced labor ought to qualify me to speak concerning the system and the deteriorating effect which it has upon those who are compelled to work under it. I have already stated that, after my attempt to escape, I was shifted to another cell. At the same time, I was taken out of the stitching room and given a job in the making room, scouring shoe soles on a buffing machine. The fellow operating this machine had contracted consumption, and died a few days later in the tuberculosis ward. The fine particles of dust

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coming from the buffing machine got the better of him, settling in his lungs and making him an easy victim of consumption.

The pipe and blower supposed to draw off the dust made by the buffing process were constantly clogged; and the man operating the machine was often covered with dust which filled his nostrils and mouth and lungs. After a few weeks of work on my new job, my skin turned sallow and my throat and lungs began to be irritated. From the shop window, I had a fairly good view of the prison cemetery, the "bone yard," we called it. It was in a corner of the prison farm, outside the wall and fenced off. The only monument in the place was a small, wooden shed which served as a toilet for the men working on the prison farm.

Every time I saw a long pine box carried by the prison team to that corner of the farm and consigned to a six-by-three hole in the ground, a shudder came over me. For six years and four months, I worked at that machine, wondering whether my time would come before release.

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My daily task was to buff two thousand pairs of shoes. As time went on, I got to a point at which I could do my work mechanically, with my eyes shut, just like an automaton grinding out dollars for the prison contractor. I got nothing for my work,¹ and I had no idea of making a living by in it case I should ever get out alive.

Thousands of men have served time in Wethersfield Prison, many of them like myself spending many years there. They were all reduced to this dead level of slavery, and kept there.

It was in the spring of 1914 that a tidal wave of public sentiment against the prison contract labor system swept over the country. The Connecticut State Legislature considered several bills to abolish the system at Wethersfield. The clique of contractors and politicians interested in the maintenance of the system, however, got together and killed every one.

¹ Since that time, a new system under which a prison laborer is paid ten cents a day, with bonuses for production above his "task," has been instituted. A piece work plan is also said to aid the convict workers in adding a little to their earnings.

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The contract of the shoe company expired. They were given ninety days of grace to get out; but only to let two shirt companies of Chicago come into the prison plant at Wethersfield. A powerful business organization, operating under various firm names, which possesses the contracts in half a dozen different prisons in the United States, acts in coöperation with big Chicago mail order business houses. At this present day, they flood the market with prison-made shirts bearing all sorts of labels.

The last eighteen months of my prison sentence at Wethersfield were spent in slaving for these shirt companies. My work was the same as that I had done for the first period of my stay in the prison, running a sewing machine. My task was some fourteen dozen pairs of shirt cuffs a day. The average daily output of the plant was eight hundred dozen shirts. All sorts of speeding-up devices were installed and punishments were inflicted upon a man failing to perform his task. He might be deprived of correspondence privileges, or

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reduced in grade, or even taken to the "dark cell." I could never understand the senselessness which threw a man into a dark hole and fed him on bread and water for a week, and then took him out after that period of suffering and put him to work again and expected him to get out his task in his weakened condition. Two or three doses of that treatment were enough to undermine a man's health permanently and make him subject to consumption.

Boys of nervous temperament not infrequently broke down under the strain of constant driving at their machines. Insanity sometimes resulted from it. I remember several cases, when men in a fit of rage and madness smashed their machines. I distinctly remember one case, that of young Matthew Fay. Young Fay ran away from his home out in Wyoming and joined the United States Navy at the age of sixteen, he said. He must have lied about his age, for he seemed no older than fifteen at most. A few weeks after his arrival at the Naval Training Station, he was court-martialed for an offense and sentenced

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to serve five years at Wethersfield. I saw the boy the day he entered the prison, with rosy cheeks and apparently in the best of health. He was as high-strung as a young horse, and full of life.

Young Fay was put to work making shirts at a machine near mine. At first, he tried hard to master his task; but he soon broke down. It was "the hole" for him—three days out and six days in. Each time he came out he appeared weaker, more broken and discouraged. I noticed that the color in his face disappeared. He became sallow and his eyes began to stand out in his face. One day when his machine broke down, he disengaged the driving belt, jumped up on the table, seized the heavy sewing machine, and started to smash it by throwing it down on the floor. His furious cries could be heard all over the prison.

The enraged boy, seeing the shop officer coming toward him, picked up the broken machine and threw it out of the shop window, which was unbarred. Then, yelling, he tried to jump

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through the half-open window down into the stone-paved prison yard, some forty feet below. He would have succeeded, had not one of the prisoners near to him thrown his arms around the half-crazed boy and thus saved him from killing or maiming himself. Then the guard arrived on the scene and took a hand.

Seeing the boy still struggling with his fellow-prisoner, the guard brought his loaded cane down on young Fay's head, rendering him unconscious. None of the seventy-odd prisoners in the shop had looked for such a cowardly act on the part of the officer, since the boy had done no one any bodily harm. They carried young Matthew Fay, bleeding and foaming at the mouth, downstairs and across the prison yard and into the hospital—so I thought. Later we heard that the deputy warden had ordered him put into the dungeon in that state. A week later I saw through the shop window two men, under surveillance of the deputy warden, carrying some one on a stretcher across the yard toward the hospital. It was young Matthew Fay. He was alive, but very

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weak from the treatment he had passed through.

A month or so later, young Fay was taken from the Wethersfield prison, long before his sentence had expired, by special order from the Navy Department in Washington, and sent to the naval tuberculosis camp in Colorado, where he died a short time after.

I could go on telling of other cases of like nature, in which men in the last stages of consumption were made to go on slaving nine and ten hours a day at Wethersfield, making shirts to be sent out for sale to the general trade. The danger to society of possible infection can be imagined. My object in writing about the features of the contract labor system in prison is not to arouse mere sentimental concern for the men unfortunate enough to get caught in it, as a punishment for wrongdoing. It is to show the utter futility and the terrible danger of the system itself, the soul-destroying effect which it has upon the convict and the menace which it constitutes to society.

Furthermore, my purpose is to point out

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some possible remedies. First of all, such state institutions should not be open to use for private commercial gain and connected with politics. Competitive business has little or no regard for the welfare of the community. Dollars and cents are the value by which its success is tested; and gain, not community service or reform, is the aim of the prison contractor. "Get all you can" is the motto; and it is not surprising that the rule it implies is enforced when it is realized that some prison authorities are among the beneficiaries.

According to the latest issues of its *Monthly Record*, there are at present five hundred and eighty-odd men at the Connecticut State Prison at Wethersfield. Out of these five hundred and eighty-odd, some five hundred or more are employed in working for the prison contractors, while their families suffer or become public charges. These five hundred men, fed on the coarsest food, clothed in the cheapest way, and housed almost like caged animals, should under favorable conditions not

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only support themselves but also a community of at least two thousand persons in comparative ease and comfort. That such conditions can exist in this twentieth century, in a state which likes to boast of its culture and enlightenment, is beyond understanding.

All state institutions, and our prisons and reformatories especially, ought to be sources of revenue rather than of expense to the State. To accomplish this, it is necessary to abolish the private contract labor system, eliminate rotten prison politics, and permit full publicity concerning all procedure in such institutions. The public should have the control, and not private groups. The man at the head of a prison should be just as efficient, capable, and honest as the man at the head of a university or hospital, for within the walls of a prison you will find every problem of human character.

No one will question that a useful trade learned in prison will benefit a man when he comes out. Next, there should be some system of remuneration by which the prisoner

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could help to furnish support to his family while undergoing confinement, or provide himself with a little fund on which to make a new start in life when he is released.

There are some encouraging signs that progressive representatives of the people are taking an interest in this problem. Woodrow Wilson, while President, received from the National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor, organized to further honest industry in our prisons as opposed to unscrupulous exploitation by contractors, a medal for distinguished service in this cause. The reason for the honor was an executive order of September 4, 1918, empowering agents of the War Department to place orders for material with heads of penal institutions. The order provided that the compensation for producing such material should be the prevailing price of like commodities in the vicinity of the institution furnishing them, and that compensation and hours of labor for inmates of penal institutions working on Government orders should be based upon the standard hours and wages.

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prevailing in the vicinity of the institution. The *pro rata* cost of maintenance was to be deducted.

Similar awards have been made to Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, who was influential in introducing the prison labor problem as an international issue in the program for consideration by the International Labor Commission of the Peace Conference in Paris, to Thomas Mott Osborne, in whom all convicts knowing of his demonstration of prison self-government at Sing Sing hope and trust as the exponent of a principle looking toward a better day in prison administration, and to Dwight W. Morrow, who has been an active, practical supporter in business of the program for honest industry and true trade training in prisons. The distinguished service medal of the National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor is a gold medal with a design representing free labor extending the hand of brotherhood and help to convict labor.

The work of The Prison Survey Committee

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is also of great importance. In such activities the hope lies; and some day the results will be seen. The problem challenges the intelligence and humane spirit of the Nation.

CHAPTER XVII

THE HUMAN TOUCH IN PRISON

ON a recent visit to Hartford, Connecticut, I called on a man who for many years has taken a deep interest in prisoners and in the problem of prison reform. In the course of our conversation, he asked me point-blank this question:

"What was the real agency which brought about your reform while in prison?"

"The 'human touch,' " I replied promptly.

"Explain to me what you mean by the 'human touch.' "

"Well, I'll tell you," said I. "During the first two years of my life at Wethersfield prison, I never went near the prison chapel. I didn't believe in any kind of religion.

"It was two years before I found out about the real character of some of the classes in the prison Sunday chapel, which as you know are conducted by members of various Hartford

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churches. It was a prisoner working at the machine next to mine who got me interested in the Sunday chapel services. He had joined a class of about twenty men, and he told me about the teacher, how sincere he was and how he used to bring magazines and other reading matter for the members of his class.

"At first, I poo-pooed the idea of attending a 'Sunday School.' Moreover, many of the 'cons' made fun of the 'Sunday School boys.' Many of the boys also were insincere hypocrites, thinking that going to chapel would help them to shorten their terms in prison and get out by the 'religious route.' It is a well-known fact, too, that many who do succeed in obtaining parole or pardon in this way are among the ones who fail to make good later. It makes it hard for the few who are really sincere in their religious belief. Those who make no secret of unbelief are not to be blamed for their sarcastic remarks and derision of those long-faced hypocrites who never fail to say grace before eating their hash at the prison table and who take pains to carry a Bible un-

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der their arms on every occasion. You know, by experience, how discouraging it is to extend a helping hand to such a man, and in the end to be deceived by him. His 'backsliding' has been the cause of many a sincere and helpful worker's losing faith in men and confidence in his endeavor, and giving it up as a waste of time. It makes it harder for every other man who comes out of prison to get a chance really to go straight.

"It so happened that about this time, I got myself into trouble. A 'screw' (officer) reported me to the deputy one morning for talking in the dining room. Without a hearing, the deputy marched me across the yard and handed me over to two husky guards in the hall, with the order to take me 'down below.' In Wethersfield the 'cooler' or dungeon, as you may know, was seven feet below the surface of a brick building adjoining the main cell house. A trap door in the floor of this building led to the dungeon. One of the guards opened the trap door and I was hustled downstairs, where I found myself in a semidark cellar with a

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row of eight vaultlike cells built parallel to the wall. I was told to take off my clothes and was searched for contraband articles. Then the two heavy sheet metal doors leading to one of the punishment cells were swung open, and I was told to 'get in,' my clothing being thrown in after me. With a bang, the double doors closed upon me, and I was left in complete darkness, fishing around for my clothing and trying to dress as best I could. Half an hour or so later, the dungeon doors opened again, and the deputy warden accompanied by a guard, who carried a lantern, appeared.

"The deputy took hold of my wrists and clapped a pair of handcuffs on them. Then he pulled me over to the back of the dungeon, where a bolt with a big iron ring was stuck some seven feet up in the cell wall. Another click of steel, and I hung there like a carcass of beef, my feet just touching the floor. I started to say something; but before I knew what was happening, the doors were slammed shut, the bolts fell into position, and I was left alone, chained to the wall like some wild animal.

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Four holes, each about the size of a silver dollar, admitted the only air and light that came into the cell. It required some time for my lungs to get used to the scanty supply of air; and the smell of the cell was even more suffocating.

"Then followed long, long hours and days of physical torture and mental agony. The injustice of the punishment made me furiously angry. Yet there I hung; and it dawned on me that I was merely getting a dose of the 'cooler,' as so many hundreds had before me. I no longer wondered why boys who were thrown into such a hole in the best of health emerged mere physical wrecks.

"It was nine o'clock in the morning when the deputy chained me up. It was nine o'clock at night when the night captain released the handcuffs and gave me a drink of water and a slice of bread to eat. A board served as my bed; and the damp cold air kept me shivering and disturbed my sleep.

"On the third day, I was so weak that I could hardly stand; and the steel handcuffs

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had cut into my wrists, causing them to swell. When the deputy chained me up that morning, I called his attention to this swelling. As a lesson to me not to protest, he made the handcuffs tighter. I ground my teeth and endured the pain until finally my hands and wrists became numb. My brain, too, sagged into a state of numbness. My whole mind was muddy; I couldn't think clearly. I only knew that I would rather die hanging to the wall than give the prison officials the satisfaction of breaking my spirit. One afternoon, the sixth day of my confinement in the dungeon, the deputy opened the door and proceeded to release me. While he removed the handcuffs from my swollen and bleeding wrists, he said: 'Think you can keep your tongue in check now?'

"When I came out of the 'cooler,' I was given a bath and demoted to the second grade, which meant the wearing of a striped suit, the reduction of writing privileges, and the loss of five days' 'good time.' I was put into a cell on the second gallery, set apart for second

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grade prisoners. That particular cell, I was told, had been standing empty for some time. I was also told that the man who had occupied it before me was in the last stages of consumption. It was said that one morning he was found unconscious; and that they had to carry him over to the 'T. B.' ward, where he died during the week I was in the 'cooler.' My cell appeared never to have been fumigated, nor the mattress and blankets aired. Everything was just as he had left it, not even the drinking cup and half empty medicine bottles having been removed. In the condition of weakness I was in, I never could tell how I resisted the germs of the disease which is the dread of every prison inmate.

"It was the Sunday following my release from the 'cooler' that I first attended the chapel services. You remember how I looked that morning, when you first saw me. I was as weak as a cat. I needed a little fresh air and exercise and the chapel was the only place where I could get it. I had been in my cell since six o'clock Saturday night and I wouldn't

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get out again until seven o'clock Monday morning. So the half hour in the chapel looked good. I didn't go for the sake of spiritual help. I went for physical recreation.

"Well, I listened to every word you said; and when you got through I felt like kicking myself for not going to the Sunday classes before. You talked to us like a man; and the frankness of your talk sank deep into my mind.

"Do you remember when we marched out at the end of the services and you shook me by the hand, asking me to come again? Probably you don't; but I do. You were the first man in civilian clothes who had spoken a kind word to me in over two years. And let me tell you, a hearty handshake and a pleasant smile and a kind word work wonders in the hearts of men who are 'down and out.'

"That is what I mean by the 'human touch' in prison. It was a month or two after our first meeting, I believe, that I wrote you a letter asking you to come and see me on one of the regular visiting days. You remember? I was longing for some one to talk to, some

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one who would take an interest in me, some one in whom I could confide and who would have confidence in me."

At the word "confidence," my friend straightened up in his desk chair, and said:

"Yes, I distinctly remember the afternoon when I visited you at Wethersfield. I had some difficulty in getting permission to see you. The officer in charge gave me a look of surprise when I mentioned your name to him. He reached for the prison record book on the desk before him and slowly turned the pages. When at last he came to your name and number and record, he said:

"'You really wish to see that man? Do you know who he is? He is the Mark Twain burglar, a very bad man.' And throwing the ledger on the table, he told me that I could not see you and walked away.

"A moment later the prison chaplain came in. I stopped him and said: 'Chaplain, do you know anything about such and such a man?' mentioning your name.

"'Yes,'" came the slow reply. 'He is the

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Mark Twain burglar, a bad man, and we haven't much confidence in him.'

" 'By the way,' I rejoined, 'have you any confidence in any of the men in the prison at all?'

" 'No,' said the chaplain, 'we have very little confidence in any of the inmates.'

"The guard, seeing that I still desired to visit you, finally admitted me; and you were brought over to the visitors' table. The half-hour talk we had together impressed me very much, in spite of the guard who sat beside you at the table. From the very start, I felt that you meant business. I felt that you wanted to make good if you could be given a chance. When I saw you being led away by the prison guard, my heart went out to you in sympathy. Your prison stripes faded away. I saw in you not the burglar but the man, and a brother in need of a friend and a helping hand. You have never betrayed my confidence; and I know you never will."

It is the "human touch" we need, every one of us; for, in a sense, we are all more or less in prison.

CHAPTER XVIII

FRIENDS IN NEED

AFTER my first experience in the prison chapel, I looked forward to the coming Sunday with much anticipation. In the meantime, I did some real hard thinking.

What did these men gain by coming down to Wethersfield on Sunday mornings and talking to a lot of convicts? What was their object? Did they really believe that their talk would make any impression on the dull minds of the social perverts and worn-out slaves of the prison contractor?

The prisoner is the most suspicious man on earth, especially in matters pertaining to religion and the profession of religion. You must "show him" before you can make him believe anything. The system has turned his mind into a blank, and he imagines that every man he meets is "down on him." For the life of him, he cannot believe that a stranger regards

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him as a human being, a man whom anybody else would permit even to wipe his shoes off. He is helpless, and suspects everybody with whom he has to deal. He feels like a wild animal, continually being chased by the hunter when he is at large and constantly watched and prodded when he is caged. That was the way I felt on that memorable Sunday when I entered the chapel.

On the Sunday following, I went again. A different man was teaching the class. The service opened with a hymn. Before I knew it, I found myself singing as loud as I could. All the men were singing, and how they could sing! It seemed as if they would take the roof off the prison chapel. I always enjoyed the singing. Many of the men attended chapel just for that—to “blow off steam,” as they expressed it, and exercise their lungs. It made a man feel better.

With the conclusion of the singing, the lesson of the day was read and the teaching commenced. The teacher of the morning, a fine fatherly-looking man of about sixty, stood

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up and greeted us with a pleasant smile, a smile that showed his sincerity and the great sympathy that was in his heart for the men before him. Slowly and deliberately, he spoke—not mere meaningless phrases and empty platitudes, but words of truth and kind counsel, such as a father would speak to his children. I listened attentively to every word he said. When he had finished speaking, there was no doubt in my mind as to that man's sincerity and honesty of purpose. When the signal for marching out was given, our teacher shook hands with every man in the class, giving each a word of encouragement and cheer; and always I noticed that pleasant smile on his face. I decided that I would come back again.

I suppose that some people would call this sentimental; and condemn this man for wasting his time on a lot of social outcasts. But such people don't recognize the fact that the man behind the bars is a human being, in spite of what he may have done in the past. They fail to realize that an honest, friendly smile, a genuine handshake and a few heartening words,

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spoken at the right moment to a man who supposes himself a social outcast shunned by every one, are often the start toward reclaiming many a criminal for loyal and useful citizenship. It was the influence of just such a smile and handshake and word of encouragement which gave me the first impulse toward changing my whole attitude toward society and the law.

I had already had enough experience in burglary to disgust me with a life of law breaking; but I had been able to see no way out. I felt caught in a hopeless net.

Now I experienced the "human touch" while in prison, at a time when I imagined that every honest man was turned against me. It started a new process of thought in my mind. Gradually I resolved to show that if somebody really believed in him and expected it of him, a convict could "come back" as well as any man.

Moreover, the argument which was made to me, that every man who comes out of prison and turns back to crime again intensifies the suspicious prejudice against all convicts and

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makes it harder for every other ex-convict to get a fair chance, while every man who comes out and goes straight makes it just so much easier for every other, had a strong appeal to me. I began to take a point of view broader than the personal one. Certainly I desired that nothing I might do should tend to make life harder for my fellow convicts in and out of prison if I could help it. Slowly, I determined to try to do what I could to make the road easier for all the others, by acting so as to create confidence in the ability, even of ex-criminals, to make good, if given an opportunity.

It is true that before I got caught in the Mark Twain burglary I had intended to go straight. The first two years in Wethersfield, however, and the brutal cruelty I saw there, had scattered most of my good resolutions. There was not a soul to take any interest in my welfare, for, besides the prison officials, no one knew that I was there in prison. But now things changed. There were at least two men outside the walls whom I could call my friends.

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It was some months after my first meeting with Mr. R——, a business man, and with Mr. D——, principal of one of the Hartford schools, that I started to correspond with them and to tell them something of my past life. They immediately showed interest and promptly answered my letters, never failing to say a word of cheer and encouragement to me in the endeavor to demonstrate a new attitude. I became a regular attendant at Sunday chapel, for Sunday was my day of anticipation, bringing me in touch with *free men* who greeted me with friendliness and who showed confidence in me. That half hour every Sunday was a change from the degrading monotony of the prison existence, and made all the rest of it bearable. I would not have missed it one week for anything in the world.

As the months and years dragged slowly by, the number of my friends outside the prison increased gradually. Many of them came to visit me on Fridays, the regular visiting days at the prison. All of them were practical men of affairs in the city of Hartford, who took a

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deep and sincere interest not only in my personal welfare but in the conditions of life in the prison itself, so far as it was possible for them to do so.

Conditions in the prison had reached such a stage that it was simply scandalous. Assaults and fights among the inmates were an everyday occurrence. The dark dungeons held their full quota; and it became necessary for the prison officials to convert more cells into "dark cells." The food was so bad that one night during supper a small riot broke out. The prisoners started to make a wreck of the dining room by smashing their dishes on the concrete floor. This only served to make the already tight screws in the place even tighter. On a Monday morning, after the cells had been unlocked and the signal had been given for marching out, one of the inmates made a dive from the top gallery. He landed head foremost on the hard cell house floor. They took the dead man by the heels and dragged him down the corridor out of sight. He was a "lifer," and not being able to endure the system

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longer he did the "Dutch act" in order to shorten his sentence. It was about this time that young Matthew Fay also went raging mad in the sewing room, and created the disturbance there which led to his maltreatment and death. I felt that something must come to change and better such terrible conditions.

The public at large was kept in profound ignorance of these facts. Even the Prison Board of Directors knew little of the real state of affairs in the prison, and so did nothing to remedy conditions. The mail of the prisoners was strictly censored. Any letters criticizing the prison officials and their conduct of affairs were promptly destroyed. Everything was done to prevent news of prison conditions from reaching the outside world.

Neither was news of special interest to prisoners, from the outside world, ever permitted to get in. Every article on prisons or prison reform was carefully cut out of the newspapers which were admitted by the prison censor. All this was under the control of an autocrat—the warden.

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At last, however, vague rumors of the great prison reform wave which swept over the country in 1914 began to circulate inside the prison walls at Wethersfield. A new day had dawned; and the facts could no longer be entirely suppressed. Stories of the great achievement of "Tom Brown" (Thomas Mott Osborne) were being recounted and discussed, even by the old prison guards, men who had grown gray under the old system. Although it was against the rules of the institution for outsiders to talk about prison reform, yet the teachers at Sunday chapel discussed the subject, sometimes in spite of the guards' protests. Many of the teachers whose acquaintance I had made and who came to visit me, used to ask my point of view on prison conditions. This gave me the opportunity to tell them something of the needs at Wethersfield and of the system of exploitation, so far as talk about it was expedient. I felt that the bitter cry of the men behind the bars was beginning to reach the public. The name of Thomas Mott Osborne was in every prisoner's mouth. We wondered

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whether the great reform wave would strike conservative Connecticut and make any impression on prison officials there.

At last the day arrived when the old cast-iron rules at Wethersfield were relaxed, and the prisoners received the privilege of talking for fifteen minutes while eating dinner. It was the first time in the history of the old prison when inmates had been allowed to talk with each other freely and naturally. Even this small reform was a long step forward in the right direction. Only six months previously I had had to suffer for a week in the dungeons for talking at table.

The visits of my friends became more frequent as the time drew near for my release from prison. Especially the kindness of Mr. G. T. B. of Hartford I shall never be able to repay. Here was a hard-working man with a large family to support, actually sacrificing his time to visit me, supposedly a hardened criminal, in prison! The influence of his cheerful smile and encouraging words upon me was tremendous. The true spirit of Christian brother-

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hood was reflected in that man's face. I could not resist it.

At last the day arrived when I was to step out and face the world once more—a free man, this time not without friends. Those self-sacrificing workers whose friendship I had cultivated in prison were waiting for me to come out; and the great thing which made the difference to me was the feeling that they were waiting with confidence in me. One of my teachers, Mr. B. of one of the fire insurance companies of Hartford, had extended to me a cordial invitation to take dinner in his home on the day of my release. At first I hesitated to accept his invitation. Such a thing had never happened to me before; it was almost incredible to me. It is impossible for a man who has never been in that position to realize how I felt—a convict being invited to dinner in a good home! Finally I went.

The experience gave me conclusive proof of the changed attitude of the public toward the man in prison. It also proved to me that if a man is sincere in the resolution to "make good,"

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there are people outside the prison who will stand by him and help him to get a right start. This was an absolutely new thought to me. Always before I had been let out into a cold and forbidding world, which greeted me only with suspicion and fear. This new reception created in me an entirely new attitude toward the world which always hitherto I had regarded with bitter hate.

The great problem in dealing with crime and criminals in the future is how to bring such men, who are willing to give the offender a fair chance to prove a determination to be honest, in touch with convicts in prison and at the time of their release. The Mutual Welfare League has begun the solution of this problem. The Welfare League men are given every opportunity while in prison to cultivate the friendship of the right kind of people outside the prison walls. As soon as a man finds that he has friends in the great world outside, who care for him and have confidence in his ability and will to "make good," the battle is half won. His resolution to "do good" and "make good,"

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the motto of the league, is strengthened and reënforced by the knowledge that some one is ready to help him fight the battle of honest work against crime. The Welfare League Association, under the leadership of Thomas Mott Osborne, stands ready to provide him with employment and to see that he gets a square deal.

That is really all a man wants or needs when he comes out of prison, if he has any of the right stuff in him. He is not looking for charity, nor for sentimental sympathy. Neither "easy money" nor "soft talk" do him any good. Give him a decent job, so that he can earn an independent and self-respecting livelihood; and if he is a man with any red blood in his veins, he will work out his own salvation without further assistance from anybody.

In conclusion, I want to say a few words about prison discipline and punishment in general. No human being has ever been benefited by being confined in a dark cell, by being starved, chained up by the wrists, beaten, or

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by undergoing any other enforced physical or mental torture.

If a man or woman goes wrong, it is either because of some physical or mental defect or because of bad surroundings or lack of education. Hence the question arises: is punishment or cure the proper method of correction? In order to answer this question, we must first of all banish the idea of a "criminal class" and treat every prisoner as an individual. We must study him physically and mentally, and endeavor to discover the real cause which led to his offenses against social law.

To punish the refractory prisoner by solitary confinement, by feeding him on bread and water or by chaining him up, simply makes him worse, in most cases. Hard physical labor on a rock pile, with plenty of fresh air and sunshine, is a better and saner method of "punishment," to my mind, than the "cooler" or dungeon.

By striking fear into a man's heart, you never gain his loyalty or real respect. Even a dog cannot bear to be kicked without snarling

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at the kicker. Also, the old and now almost obsolete system of silence, which used to be so popular with prison wardens, cannot be too strongly condemned. It made sneaks of the prisoners. To try to stop men from communicating is ridiculous. What is needed is to teach them honor.

CHAPTER XIX

THE NEW LIFE

THE twenty-first day of October, 1916, was bright and clear. It was the last day of my prison career. At ten o'clock sharp, the great double iron gates were opened and I passed out of the prison where I had spent some eight years of my life. The duration of my sentence was shortened considerably by "good time" gained by "orderly" conduct. It was Saturday. My prison term did not legally expire until the following day; but since prisoners are not discharged on Sunday, it happened that I was turned loose one day earlier. Mr. R——, one of my friends, had made arrangements to meet me at the prison gates. Business, however, had called him out of town. At the window of the prison clerk's office I learned that I had four cents coming to me. I had thought that I would get at least five cents for carfare to Hartford; but the four

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cents were all I had to my credit at the warden's office. The State of Connecticut did not give to discharged prisoners a sum of five or ten dollars as is stipulated by law in some other States.

In Connecticut, a certain sum is appropriated by the state legislature in session every two years, and is placed in the hands of the Connecticut Prisoners' Aid Association. This is to provide released prisoners with sums not to exceed a limited amount. In order to receive this gift, the ex-convict has to apply at the State Capitol in Hartford. Now I have no intention of disparaging the wise arrangement of advancing aid through the Association. To me, however, to have to walk up to a secretary at the Capitol and ask for aid looked too much like begging for charity; and for this reason I decided not to trouble the Prisoners' Aid Association. My experience in the Central Howard Association in Chicago was still sufficiently fresh in mind. These people mean well; but they fail to help most men just out of prison, because they do not understand them.

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No man coming out of prison should be made an object of charity. The ex-prisoner resents the idea and revolts against it; he has good reasons for the feeling, too.

The State puts him into prison to be punished for wrong doing. While in prison he is forced to work. The State pays him, or at least usually used to pay him, nothing for his work. He feels that he is entitled to some wages for the labor which he is forced to do, in order to have some small resources when he comes out. Enforced labor without pay is slavery. What man with a spark of decent self-respect left in him would not resent the idea of an official "hand out" after years of labor behind prison walls? Unless the prisoner is given what he can feel to be a just wage for his day's work, attempts at rehabilitation of the social point of view of the man behind the bars are doomed to failure.

The prison clerk made me sign a receipt before he gave me my four cents. I put the money in my pocket and started to walk out. As I reached the door, some one called me

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back. It was the warden of the prison, who asked me to wait. I had forgotten something. A year or so before my release, in response to a letter of mine inquiring about Albert Bigelow Paine's famous biography of Mark Twain, the publishing firm of Harper and Brothers in New York had mailed me the volumes of the biography as a Christmas present, with friendly wishes and the hope that I might gain some benefit from reading them. The books were in a box, and were handed over to me together with a small package of letters belonging to me. A few days before, the box had been handed to the warden for inspection, to see that it did not contain notes from inmates, which I might try to smuggle out of prison. Delivering my property, the warden said:

"Well,——" (calling me by name for the first time since I had been under his care), "I understand you lack a cent in carfare." He dug his hand into one of his trousers' pockets, and pulled out a handful of loose coins. Picking out a penny, he offered it to me, say-

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ing: "Here! That'll help you to pay your fare. Otherwise you'll have to walk to Hartford."

I thanked the warden; and told him that the Lord had given me a pair of legs and the power to walk, and I would rather walk than accept his penny. I cherished no ill will toward the warden or any of the other prison officials in particular. They were merely the tools of the upholders of the system. But the warden's penny, offered in that way, did not look good to me.

I was thirty-five years old when I left the Connecticut State Prison at Wethersfield, with a cheap suit of clothes on my back, a pair of prison brogans on my feet, four cents in my pocket, and a set of Mark Twain's biography under my arm. My most valuable possession was the determination to go straight and stay straight, even though I realized the handicaps I faced.

I had learned no trade in the prison which would be of use to me. The lack of outdoor exercise and the prison routine and cell life

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had impaired my health and strength. I was hardly equipped in any way for the battle for existence, except in the desire to prove that I could fight my way in it. Also, there had been restored to me faith in my fellow men; and their confidence in me and treatment of me had given me faith in myself.

At first everything seemed strange and new to me. Every person I passed on the road appeared to regard me curiously, like some strange being from another planet. They knew well enough where I came from. A man driving a cart refused to give me a lift toward the city, regarding me with cold suspicion. My whole mind was in a state of confusion; but I kept on tramping toward Hartford, sure that there friends would welcome me. The three mile walk, easy enough for a healthy man, tired me out. When I reached South Main Street, my feet were hurting painfully. The heavy brogans had raised big blisters on my heels; and my legs, unaccustomed to exercise, ached all through. Arriving at the center of the City, I inquired my way to the

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Y. M. C. A. Down Pearl Street I fairly staggered, like a drunken man, so weak were my legs and so great was the pain in my feet.

One of my friends, Mr. B——, had told me to meet him at the Y. M. C. A., and to ask for Mr. Billings, one of the secretaries, in case I should arrive before the appointed time. Mr. Billings received me very kindly when I told him who I was and where I had come from, and offered to assist me in every way. His hearty handclasp and friendly smile made me feel that I had found a home among friends at last. No one who has never been shut away from the world for years on end can imagine what it means to a man who never had a home to be taken in by the Y. M. C. A. and treated like a human being. To be told that the place was my own to use, and to come and go as I pleased, was enough to fill my whole consciousness with joy. I have never forgotten the thrill of being welcomed into human society again; and whenever I go to Hartford, I never fail to see Mr. Billings, the first man to offer me hospitality after those years of hardship

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and suffering. It was really at the Hartford Y. M. C. A. that I got my firm, new footing in life, and the men who made it possible were all really sincere Y. M. C. A. workers.

After a serious talk with Mr. Billings, Mr. B—— arrived and took me to his home, where a bountiful dinner was ready. Mr. B——'s little three year old daughter came to meet us. In all the years I had spent at Wethersfield, I had never seen a child nor heard a child's voice. I loved children; and when I saw Mr. B——'s little daughter and heard her prattling to her father, I completely broke down. Sitting there at the table, in the circle of that family, I realized for the first time in my life what a great fool I had been and what a terrible mistake I had made in trying to "get even with society." I realized also that society was an established order with established rules and regulations, and that a man trying to break these rules must pay the penalty. I no longer felt that society owed me a living, which I had a right to take without giving value in return.

It was well toward evening when, accom-

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panied by my friend, I went out to look for a room, which we finally found. Mr B—— advanced me enough to pay my first two weeks' room rent. That also made a deep and lasting impression on me. That night I slept in a real bed again for the first time in years.

The next day, Sunday, I got up early to call at Mr. Bockman's home and have breakfast with his family. Then I went with him to church, the first time I had been in a church outside of a prison in over twenty years. During the afternoon I called on some of my other friends, where I was cordially received in their homes and welcomed by their families.

To the average person, this may seem a small matter; but to me it was of tremendous significance, a new experience of great importance and honor. It was the first time since I had reached maturity that such a thing had ever happened to me. How many people will receive an ex-convict, just released from prison, into their homes and entertain him? Not very many, I suppose. Yet these people did nothing more than to practice the Christian rule which

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is so generally preached: "Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you."

The following morning, while on my way to look for work, I bumped into a man whose face was quite familiar to me. He took me by the hand and called me by my first name. For the life of me, I could not recognize him, until he told me who he was. It was almost two years since we had worked together in the shoe shop at Wethersfield prison. In that comparatively short time, he had succeeded in pushing ahead; and on the day we met he was a successful real estate man, with an office on Main Street in Hartford. When I told him that I had got out two days before and that I was looking for work, he promptly invited me to accompany him to his office. There he called up the vice-president of a big Hartford manufacturing concern; and this is what he said:

"Mr.—, I have a friend here who just got out of prison. He wants a chance to 'make good.' You gave me a chance when I got out. Won't you be good enough to give my friend a chance also?"

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The answer came clear and short: "Bring him down!"

We jumped into my friend's motor car and drove down to the factory for an interview with the manager. The result was that I went to work the next day as a common laborer, at wages of twelve dollars a week. There is a concrete case of mutual aid between ex-convicts, one man having worked hard and "made good" and helping to get a chance for another to do the same. Few words passed between us; there was no need for words. My friend knew what I needed, from his own experience, and he acted accordingly. Only a man whose soul has passed through the hell of prison experience can rightly understand and put himself in the place of another man coming out from the same experience.

The first two weeks I put in on my new job were enough to try me thoroughly. I was usually so tired that I could sleep little at night. Gradually, however, I regained my strength; and with the encouragement of my friends I succeeded in the endeavor.

CHAPTER XX

"MAKING GOOD"

IT was in the latter part of March, 1917, that I received a reply to a letter which I had addressed to Mr. Thomas Mott Osborne, inviting me to come to New York. I had heard a great deal about "Tom Brown," as the great prison reformer is affectionately known by every man who has done a "bit," or is still doing one, in prison. In my letter, I had told him a few things about conditions as I had found them in Wethersfield; and the case of young Matthew Fay interested him especially, as he was at that time taking a deep interest in naval prisoners. He wanted to get more information concerning conditions at Wethersfield, especially concerning the treatment of the naval prisoners confined there and working under the contract system. Before leaving Wethersfield, I had promised the "boys" there that I would do all that I could to bring about

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better conditions and more consideration for the inmates of the prison. To me, that promise was sacred; and ever since my release I have continued to endeavor to interest people of influence and public spirit in the lot of the men and women shut in behind the walls of the Connecticut State Prison.

Thus it happened that I left Hartford on the first of April for New York, to meet Mr. Osborne and to look for new work. I had always wanted to get back to the metropolis to live. When I arrived at the big hotel where he was staying, I found the prison reformer in his room. He held out his hand and greeted me with a friendly smile, calling me by my first name and asking me how I was getting along. His frank and democratic manner impressed me very much; I felt that he was sincere, and that prison reform was not simply a "rich man's fad" with "Tom Brown." He had just been "released" from the United States Naval Prison at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he had been undergoing a trial imprisonment to see what it was like for the man really under

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sentence and compulsory confinement. His hair was still short-clipped, showing that he had gone through regular prison treatment.

The interview with Mr. Osborne was interrupted by the entrance of a middle-sized man of about thirty-five years, like myself, who Mr. Osborne told me had also served fifteen years in state prison. He was then an active worker in the outside Mutual Welfare League. He had been out for a little more than a year; and in that time had secured employment for many other ex-prisoners. Mr. Osborne placed me in his charge; and I left with the feeling that "Tom Brown" was a friend upon whose coöperation an ex-convict could rely.

Through the assistance of this secretary, I obtained employment in New York.

It was when I had been in New York for about three months that, through the kind offices of Mr. Osborne, I had the privilege of meeting Mrs. Clara Clemens Gabrilowitsch, the daughter of Mark Twain. An interview was arranged, in which Mrs. Gabrilowitsch convinced herself that I was in earnest, and

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of any benefit to me, nothing which tended to make me better and to fit me to earn an honest livelihood. Of all the prisons I was in, the last was by far the worst, the most brutal and degrading. My great hope is to see these things changed, and to contribute something toward bringing about the change.

It is a matter of pride that about three years after my release it became possible for me to take out my first papers as an applicant to become a citizen of the United States. It will not be long before I shall have full citizenship and become an American by law as well as in spirit. I look forward to the time when I can use a citizen's rights to advance these purposes. But as long as politics hold sway in the administration of our prisons, I despair of any real progress toward reform. Once in a generation, perhaps, there may arise one or two men like Thomas Mott Osborne or Dean George W. Kirchwey, for instance, who are permitted to carry out some of their splendid and humane ideas. Corrupt political influences, however, hamper and defeat the services which these men

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render to society, so long as the present system prevails.

It happened that on the first evening of a prison congress I recently attended, one of the delegates walked up to me and asked me what prison I represented! I told the gentleman, who, by the way, was a former warden of Sing Sing prison, that I hadn't the honor of representing any prison officially, although as an ex-convict I represented three, and that I was there in the interest of the prisoners, doing some volunteer work for the Mutual Welfare League. The ex-warden seemed a little surprised that an ex-convict should voluntarily attend a congress of prison wardens and workers; but he greeted me in a friendly fashion. Even the ex-warden and various members of the Connecticut prison board whom I met at the Congress, men who only a few years back had put me down as a "bad egg," and refused to place any confidence in me or grant me a parole, were not averse to shaking me by the hand and wishing me well. I relate this merely to show that a man who has "made

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good" can command the respect even of old prison officials, and meet them on an equal footing. Moreover, the remark of Mark Twain about the possibility of my pals and my "going to Congress" seems not to have been far from the mark, after all. At any rate, I have had the honor of attending a prison congress.

Before me I have a copy of the *New York World* of Thursday, November 27, 1919, Thanksgiving Day. On the last page there is the following headline:

FORTY-TWO EX-CONVICTS

HOSTS TO OSBORNE

Forty-two ex-convicts, former members of the Mutual Welfare League, who are all making good and holding responsible positions in New York, last night dined Thomas Mott Osborne, founder of the League, while Warden at Sing Sing Prison, and the man who, they all said, "has enabled us to go straight."

The toastmaster who, like the others, did not wish his name mentioned, said:

"Fellows, I've heard a lot about honor systems, but I defy any one, all over the world, to find a group of men dining their former keeper.

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If it was not for such men as Tom Osborne and the honor system, which makes us go straight, New York would to-day have a crime wave as there is in Chicago now.

"Men in Chicago who come out of Joliet prison with a record are arrested on suspicion right away. They know that whether they do anything or not they will be arrested."

He asserted that "every man here to-night is as much on the level as the Police Commissioner or any other man."

A former "second story man," who has now been working for three years, arose and gave this advice:

"To be a crook is a damn hard job. Riverside Drive used to be my game. But Tom Brown has changed this for me. Work and save your pennies."

"How much have you got in the bank?" one of the men asked.

"I don't want to make anybody jealous," laughed back the ex-porch climber. He has several thousand dollars saved.

One of the most notorious confidence men ever known in New York told his story. He said that eighteen years of his life had been spent in prison, and that he had been "doing life on the installment plan." He was sent to Sing Sing and heard about the Welfare League.

"Some bull," he said, "I'm a wise guy. They can't kid me," adding, "I thought I was

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a wise guy; but I didn't know I was alive until I hit Sing Sing under Thomas Mott Osborne. When I left Sing Sing, Judge Wadhams gave me his 'duke.' He said: 'If you're forced to the wall, come here and I'll help you.' Well, I had been playing the horses and lived for a little while that way. I couldn't get work. I was right to the wall again and ready to take another 'flyer.' Then I went to Judge Wadhams and told him that I'd sooner steal than starve any day." Judge Wadhams gave him a note to a large employer who hired him at twenty dollars a week. He has now been working for eighteen months, and is earning twenty-five dollars a week. He makes up a payroll every week of two thousand dollars, he said, and is entrusted with delivering thousands of dollars for his employer.

Many others present told similar stories.

I happened to be one of the "many others present." It is unfortunate that the pressure of news and the indifference of some editors and the reactionary control over other newspapers combine to cause neglect of such evidence of a movement which is demonstrating its creative social service. But, to use the words of the great Lincoln, it is possible to "fool all of the people some of the time and

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some of the people all of the time; but you can't fool all of the people all of the time." Indeed, the day of a great awakening is at hand, when every mother's son will be judged not by the wealth he has accumulated or inherited, but by the work he has done, and his reward will be according to his work.

It should be borne in mind that not all the men in prison are there because they are naturally bad. Many of them are there because they never got a chance to show what good was in them and to prove that with proper treatment and education they would become as good citizens as any. It is a grim travesty that society looks down upon the discharged prisoner who is willing to try to make good, while it tolerates the profiteer who robs people in a legal manner of the necessities of life. As between the scoundrel who steals pennies from the poor by controlling food supplies and manipulating market prices from a mahogany desk, and the burglar who robs a rich man's home, I take my hat off to the burglar. His job at least requires nerve. The other is the

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more despicable invader of the fundamental rights of society.

Those forty-two ex-convicts who gathered at the old Park Avenue Hotel that Thanksgiving Eve and dined their former keeper are very much alive, so much so that they have been able to exert a considerable influence on public opinion and to give people a realization that the man newly released from prison is not some strange brute to be shunned or hunted, but a brother, and that it is the duty of society to receive him as a brother and to extend to him a helping hand and fair opportunity. These forty-two are living examples of the true spirit of democracy, whose recreative power has been demonstrated by the Mutual Welfare League. It is up to such ex-convicts to break down the bars of public prejudice, bars far stronger than any prison bars which ever shut us away from the world, and to teach our hard-headed brothers in business that the "human touch" and the "square deal" *can* and *will* bring even criminals back to honorable life and lift them up to the level of loyal citizen-

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ship. The smiling group around that table constituted conclusive proof that men who are "down and out" can, with genuinely friendly encouragement and practical help on the part of others, "come back."

CHAPTER XXI

ALICE

TO-DAY is Christmas Day, the third Christmas Day I have now spent in a home of my own, and with Alice, my wife.

My mind reverts to the memory of the little village up in Putnam County where I first met Alice, some thirteen years ago, to the day when the message came which called her home, to the last hour we spent together, and how then she was gone out of my life like a dream which I could never hope to realize. Then came the night of the Mark Twain burglary, and the fierce and hopeless fight on the train, which almost cost me my life, my capture and trial, and the heart-crushing sentence of ten years in State prison, and the long years of isolation.

How could I expect ever to find Alice again? Yet, try as I might, I could not blot her from my mind; and always, deep down in my heart,

ALICE

there remained alive a spark of hope that somewhere, somehow, I would yet find her again.

All the circumstances of how it came about are not necessary to relate. It is enough to say that, partly through lucky chance, I did find her. I first saw her at a Sunday afternoon concert, to which I went with a friend.

She had changed; and yet her appearance still brought to mind the picture of the girl with her big blue eyes, her kindly face, her slender figure, and the tender smile which had charmed me so long ago. She told me of the death of her parents and how she had been forced to earn her own living. Letters addressed to me in New York had been returned unopened, she said.

After some years of hard work, she had decided to marry, not so much out of love for the man as for the sake of a home of her own. Her husband proved not to be a man of strong character or affectionate disposition, but one who treated her unkindly and spent his earnings on liquor and gambling. His death, some

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two years after their marriage, released her from an unhappy relationship.

Through the kindness of a friend, she had secured a good position in one of the big New York hotels. This enabled her to live quite comfortably in the little three-room apartment which she shared with a friend.

I had never told her anything about myself; but I now decided to do so. I felt that she should know everything about me and the reason for my unexplained disappearance. So, when the right moment came, I did tell her the full story of my past. Alice, instead of scorning me as so many other women might have done, heard the narrative in a spirit of forgiveness and with sympathy for the suffering through which I had passed. Her own bitter disappointments in life, her fine sensibilities and noble character, her great knowledge of the weakness of human nature, and above all her genuine, undeserved love for me—all made her overlook everything that I had done. The fact that I had paid my debt to society and “made good” was enough.

ALICE

It was on one summer evening in the early summer; and Alice and I were sitting on a bench in the park, our thoughts turning back naturally to those other summer evenings of long ago and to the pleasant country place in which we had spent them. Alice told me that she had spent her last summer there, and that the motherly old boarding-house keeper was still living. She had said that she hoped to go to the old place again within a few weeks, and suggested that I might like to spend my vacation time there. I had not expected such a possibility; but I naturally fell in at once with the plan. Indeed, I went a step further, and suggested in turn to Alice that we should go as man and wife.

So it was our honeymoon which we spent that summer in the same quiet country place where we first met each other.

Two years ago we moved into the new home which we had leased, and which we hope some time to buy, in the little town not far from New York where I now work. We had considered several small places, all of which we liked. I

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chose this one because in the yard around the house are three fine lilac bushes which I can plunder of their fragrant blooms every spring-time, to brighten our rooms, without fear of any town constable.

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